NEW SERIAL—"THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR"
(By the Author of "The Angel of the Revolution.")

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 297.—Vol. XI. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 8, 1894. [Price One Penny.

EXTRAORDINARY OFFER!!

10,000 CARPETS

4/- LARGEST EVER SOLD AT OR NEAR THE PRICE. 4/-

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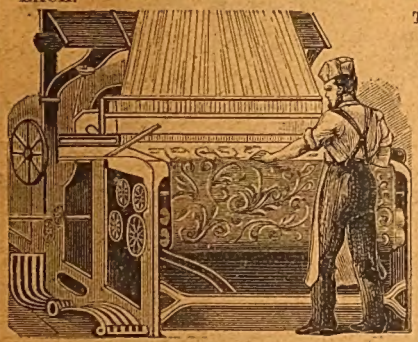

THIS PHENOMENAL OFFER is made to the readers of SHORT STORIES only. On receipt of this advertisement, accompanied by Postal Order for **4s.**, or 50 Stamps, we will forward DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our genuine **4s.** SEAMLESS, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE, TRIUMPH CARPETS, suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bed-room, &c., handsomely bordered and woven in thirty different patterns and art colourings to suit all requirements, and LARGE ENOUGH TO COVER ANY ORDINARY SIZED ROOM. These Carpets will be sold as an advertisement for the goods of the British Carpet Weaving Company, *Below the Actual Cost of Production.* They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained direct from our looms, thus saving the Purchasers all Middle Profits. Over 1,000,000 have been already sold.

GENUINE TEST.—Compare the weight and appearance with the inferior carpets advertised by other firms. With every Carpet we shall supply a very handsome **RUG** to match for **1s. 3d.** extra, or Two **CARPETS** and Two **RUGS** for **9s. 6d.**

MONEY WILLINGLY RETURNED IF NOT APPROVED.

The *Queen* says: "Decidedly stouter and handsomer than any of the kind, the price being the astounding part of the matter." *Schoolmistress:* "For style, durability, and cheapness, they cannot be beaten." *Penny Illustrated Paper:* "Manufactured in every variety of colour, and is one of the most surprising bargains I have seen." *Church Bells:* "Truly wonderful value." *Sala's Journal* says "Unequalled for cheapness combined with durability and prettiness."

Thousands of Testimonials similar to the following, and Repeat Orders have been received from our customers.

8, East Street, The Nursery, Fisherton, Salisbury.

M. Lock writes:—"I received the Carpets. Rugs, and Blankets quite safe on Monday. I really did not expect to see such beautiful Carpets, it was quite a surprise to me. If I have an opportunity of recommending them I will do so with pleasure, for the Company deserve it."

Romanhurst, Stanley Road, Teddington.

Mr. E. Barlow writes:—"I have received the Carpets, and am exceedingly pleased with them all. The Stair Carpeting is very artistic. I am so glad you recommended me the Belgravia Brussels Carpeting and Carpets for landing and hall, they being so well adapted for each purpose."

All orders despatched same day as received, must be accompanied by cutting from this Paper. Cheques and Postal Orders to be crossed "Union Bank," and made payable to J. HARGREAVES.

ESTABLISHED 1872.

Address—The British Carpet Weaving Company,
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It is not claimed that these Camomile Pills will cure all diseases, but they have 100 YEARS' REPUTATION for being UNEQUALLED and, indeed, UNAPPROACHED as a remedy for

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS

INDIGESTION BILIOUSNESS HEADACHE
STOMACH AND LIVER COMPLAINTS DEBILITY

The BEST of all TONICS and a GENTLE APERIENT.

MILD IN OPERATION, PERFECTLY SAFE, AND FREE FROM INJURIOUS DRUGS.

Sold Everywhere in Bottles at 1/1½, 2/9, and 11/- each,

Ask for "NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS," and do not be persuaded to purchase an imitation.

Prepared by NORTON'S LIMITED, 21, Spital Square, London, E.

BONNY, CHUBBY CHILDREN.

If you really want your children to be Bonny, Chubby, and Strong, with rosy cheek and pure firm flesh, give them

INFANTINA'S Strengthening SYRUP.

Sold by Chemists at **1s. 1½d.** *per bottle, or, post free, from*

THE INFANTINA COMPANY,
London, S.W.

BEETHAM'S
WORLD FAMED
CORN & BUNION PLASTER

Boxes, 1s. 1½d., of all Chemists, or post-free, for 14 stamps from the Proprietors,

M. BEETHAM & SON, Chemists,
CHELTENHAM.

IS THE BEST REMEDY EVER DISCOVERED.

It acts like magic in relieving all pain and throbbing, and soon cures the most obstinate corns & bunions. It is especially useful for reducing enlarged Great Toe Joints, which so spoil the symmetry of otherwise beautiful feet. **Thousands have been cured, some of whom had suffered for fifty years without being able to get relief from any other remedy.** (It is a thin plaster, and takes up no room in the boot.) A trial of a Box is earnestly solicited, as immediate relief is sure.

PALACE STEAMERS.—SEASON CLOSES END of SEPTEMBER or BEGINNING of OCTOBER. Weather and other circumstances permitting.

LA MARGUERITE. FASTEST STEAMER in the WORLD. (Gr. Tonnage, 2,204.)

BOULOGNE and BACK DAILY (Tuesdays excepted), for 10s. 6d. (3rd. rail and fore cabin); 3rd. rail and saloon, 12s. 6d.

Returns available three days, or for season for 2s. excess.

PARIS AND BACK, SATURDAY to MONDAY, for 21s.

Other Days, 26s. return. Return Tickets available third day of issue. Special Train when the numbers warrant it.

MARGATE and BACK, DAILY (Tuesdays excepted).

SIX HOURS ASHORE AT MARGATE for 5s. 6d. by LA MARGUERITE.

From Fenchurch-street Station for Tilbury, weekdays, 8.33 and 8.38; and Sundays, 8.45 and 8.55 a.m.

All passengers disembark at Tilbury on return journey, and travel by train to Fenchurch Street, arriving about 9.50 p.m.

Passengers may obtain tickets beforehand for rail and boat at 33, King William-Street.

Cook's Hotel Coupon Tickets for all places.

MARGATE, RAMSGATE, and Back, by ROYAL SOVEREIGN DAILY, at 9.30 a.m. (except Fridays, on which day LA MARGUERITE will run as usual from Tilbury) (but Royal Sovereign will run for Captain Fishenden's Benefit Next Friday), from OLD SWAN PIER (London Bridge), calling at S. Woolwich and Tilbury. Train Fenchurch-street Station 10.28 a.m. in connection. Tender steamer Greenwich 9.25, Blackwall 9.35 a.m. Margate Passengers can return by La Marguerite, but if they hold London Bridge tickets they must exchange same at Purser's Office on ship for rail tickets, and pay 6d., third-class train.

CAPTAIN FISHENDEN'S BENEFIT, FRIDAY NEXT.

MARGATE, RAMSGATE, and Back, by ROYAL SOVEREIGN, from Old Swan Pier, at 9.30 a.m., Greenwich, 10.0 a.m., Blackwall, 10.15 a.m., Woolwich, 10.30 a.m., Tilbury, about 11.30 a.m. Returning from Ramsgate at 4.0 p.m., Margate, 5.0 p.m. Margate passengers have about three hours ashore. Return fares: From London, 5s.; from Tilbury, 4s. Tickets on board, Company's offices, and piers.

GLEN ROSA will leave RAMSGATE at 11.0 a.m. NEXT SATURDAY for Margate, Tilbury, Woolwich, Blackwall, Greenwich, and London.

YARMOUTH and LOWESTOFT by Palace Steamer VICTORIA, from Harwich DAILY (Fridays excepted), at 3.0 p.m., in connection with the Koh-i-Noor, from Old Swan Pier, at 9.10 a.m. Return tickets available for season except as above.

Offices—33, KING WILLIAM STREET, LONDON BRIDGE, E.C.

VICTORIA STEAMERS.—SEASON CLOSES END of SEPTEMBER or BEGINNING of OCTOBER. Weather and other circumstances permitting.

CLACTON, HARWICH, and BACK in the Day. YARMOUTH, Lowestoft, Ipswich, and Felixstowe. DAILY (Fridays excepted), when the Lord of the Isles will run to Clacton, by KOH-I-NOOR, from Old Swan Pier at 9.10 a.m., calling at Woolwich (South) and Tilbury. Tender Steamer from Greenwich 9.25, and Blackwall 9.35 a.m. Special Train from Fenchurch-street Station at 9.45 and 10.15 a.m., to meet the Koh-i-Noor at Tilbury.

SALOON STEAMER LORD OF THE ISLES, from OLD SWAN, calling at Greenwich, Blackwall, and S. Woolwich. MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, and THURSDAYS, for ROSHERVILLE, GRAVESEND, SOUTHEND, and SHEERNESS, at 11 a.m. FRIDAYS, CLACTON, SOUTHEND, ROSHERVILLE, and GRAVESEND, at 9.10 a.m.

SATURDAYS, HUSBANDS' BOAT to MARGATE, and BACK, at 1.30 p.m. Train, Fenchurch-street Station 2.54 p.m., in connection.

SUNDAYS, ROUND NORE LIGHT, ROSHERVILLE, and GRAVESEND, at 2.45 p.m.

ROSHERVILLE GARDENS and GRAVESEND DAILY (Fridays excepted) by MERMAID, 10.9 a.m. and 3.0 p.m., from OLD SWAN PIER, calling at Greenwich, Blackwall, and Woolwich

HAMPTON COURT, RICHMOND, or KINGSTON, from OLD SWAN PIER at 10.0 a.m. DAILY by CARDINAL WOLSEY, calling at all piers.

KEW GARDENS, GREENWICH and BATTERSEA PARKS frequently.

Cheap Through Tickets to and from Stations on District Railway.

Offices—VICTORIA HOUSE, LAURENCE POUNTNEY LANE, E.C.

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For the Immediate Production of

BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

THE FINEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD.

Inventors and Manufacturers:

NEWBALL & MASON,

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NOTTINGHAM.

If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

Price 7s. 6d. for any Size up to 40 inches.

POST FREE U.K.

"MINNOW" LIFE BELT

Trade Mark.

FOR

LADIES, GENTLEMEN, and CHILDREN.

The Belt will support three men with their clothes on, can be inflated in a few seconds, and is so constructed that in the event of accidents the wearer is turned in a floating position, with the face well out of the water. It weighs a few ounces only, can be conveniently carried in the pocket, is made of the strongest material, nothing to get out of order, will bear a pressure of 2 to 300 lbs. and withstand any climate. Parents can with perfect confidence allow their children to bathe without fear of danger. Used by yachting and canoeing clubs, fishermen, and bathers all over the world. Worn as an ordinary belt. State size of waist. Cash to accompany all orders. Cheques and P.O.'s to be crossed "Bank of Liverpool."

The following, one of the many Testimonials received, speaks for itself:—

New Brighton Sailing Club, June 13, 1894.

Dear Sir,—It may interest you to know that we had practical illustration of the efficacy of your "Minnow" Life Belts last evening. We were struck by a heavy squall and upset whilst racing, but having, in accordance with our club rules, life belts on, in this case of your make, we suffered nothing but a little inconvenience, such as naturally arises from getting wet, and this even was partial, as your belts floated us so high, that, we were practically dry from a little above the waist up.

Yours truly, J. F. JELLICO, "Dever," N.B.S.C.

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W. R. HARGREAVES, Waterloo, near Liverpool.

BAKER'S NOVELTIES.

THE NEW "ECLIPSE" MODEL STEAM ENGINE.—The rage of the Season. These wonderful Engines work with a real oscillating cylinder (which if purchased by itself cost 1s.), strong metal boiler, funnel, large fly wheel, with pulley wheel attached for working other models, furnace, and filler complete. Carriage free 1s. 6d. Smaller size 1s.

Don't miss this grand opportunity.

THE MARVELLOUS "CHAMPION" SLIDE VALVE STEAM ENGINE.—As is no doubt well known, a slide valve cylinder is the most expensive kind made, and in fact our lowest for a slide valve cylinder itself is 7s., yet we now offer a large substantial Engine with powerful boiler, stand, furnace, fly wheel, pulley wheel, governors, metal supports, and slide valve cylinder, complete, 5s. 6d., with whistle, water tap, steam tap, very superior, 10s. 6d. These engines are sufficiently powerful to work all the models sold by us.

THE EXPRESS STEAM LOCOMOTIVE.—A beautifully japanned locomotive, with all brass fittings, dome, whistle, safety valve, starting lever, 6 wheels (all flanged), and two powerful cylinders. Only 10s. 6d., free 11s.

THE "IXION" LOCOMOTIVE STEAM ENGINE.—A splendid locomotive engine on four wheels with funnel, safety valve, dome handrails, starting lever, two powerful cylinders with furnace complete. The cheapest locomotive out. 5s., free 5s. 6d., or with whistle 5s. 6d., free 6s. Without name plate 4s. 6d., free 5s.

THE ECLIPSE ELECTRIC COIL.—We are offering the most wonderful value in Electric Coils for this Season, as special leading lines. Each one guaranteed to work, and to administer good strong shocks. No. 1 Coil is finished complete, and mounted on stand with handles and connecting wires. Price 1s., post free 1s. 3d. No. 2 Coil is a larger and more powerful ditto, better finished, and furnished with brass terminals, and is a very superior article, 2s. 6d., post free 2s. 9d. No. 3 Coil is equal to many charged 10s. 6d. for. This Coil has a regulating handle for increasing or decreasing the strength as required, and is fit for any Drawing Room, Bazaar, Lecture Hall, &c. Price 5s. 6d, post free 6s. No. 4, very handsome large Coil, with reversing motion, 10s. 6d. Any ordinary Bichromate Batteries will work these Coils, and as most people have batteries now-a-days, no further expense is incurred, but if needful, we supply a strong Bichromate Battery suitable for working No. 1 and 2 Coils for 1s. 3d., post free; or a larger ditto for the 5s. 6d. and 10s. 6d. Coil, for 2s., post free 2s. 4½d. We now give a small Battery free with every Coil sold.

THE ELECTRICAL DANCING NIGGER.—A great curiosity and a wonderful working model. The climax of electrical ingenuity and skill. By means of a powerful Electro Motor and Battery the Nigger will dance on the platform for half-an-hour at a time. A capital window attraction. Nigger, Motor, Battery, Platform, Connecting Wires, and everything complete. Price 3s. 6d., carriage free 3s. 10d.

ELECTRIC MOTORS for working Models, Machinery, &c.—All guaranteed to work, and splendid value for money. A beautiful little Motor on stand complete, only 1s., free 1s. 3d. No. 2 size much larger ditto, better finished and more powerful, with fittings, 2s. 6d., free 2s. 9d. No. 3 size, a really superior and very powerful motor, on polished stand, with brass wheel, brass terminals, and fittings, 5s. 6d., free 6s. Any bichromate battery will work these, or we supply battery for Nos. 1 and 2 Motors for 1s., free 1s. 3d.; and a powerful ditto for No. 3 for 2s., free 2s. 4½d.

Grand Illustrated Novelty Catalogue, 64 pp., 1,000 Illustrations. 1d. *stamp.*

BAKER & COMPANY, 34, Beech Street, Barbican, London, E.C.

All communications respecting Advertisements should be sent to the Advertisement partment, 2, RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

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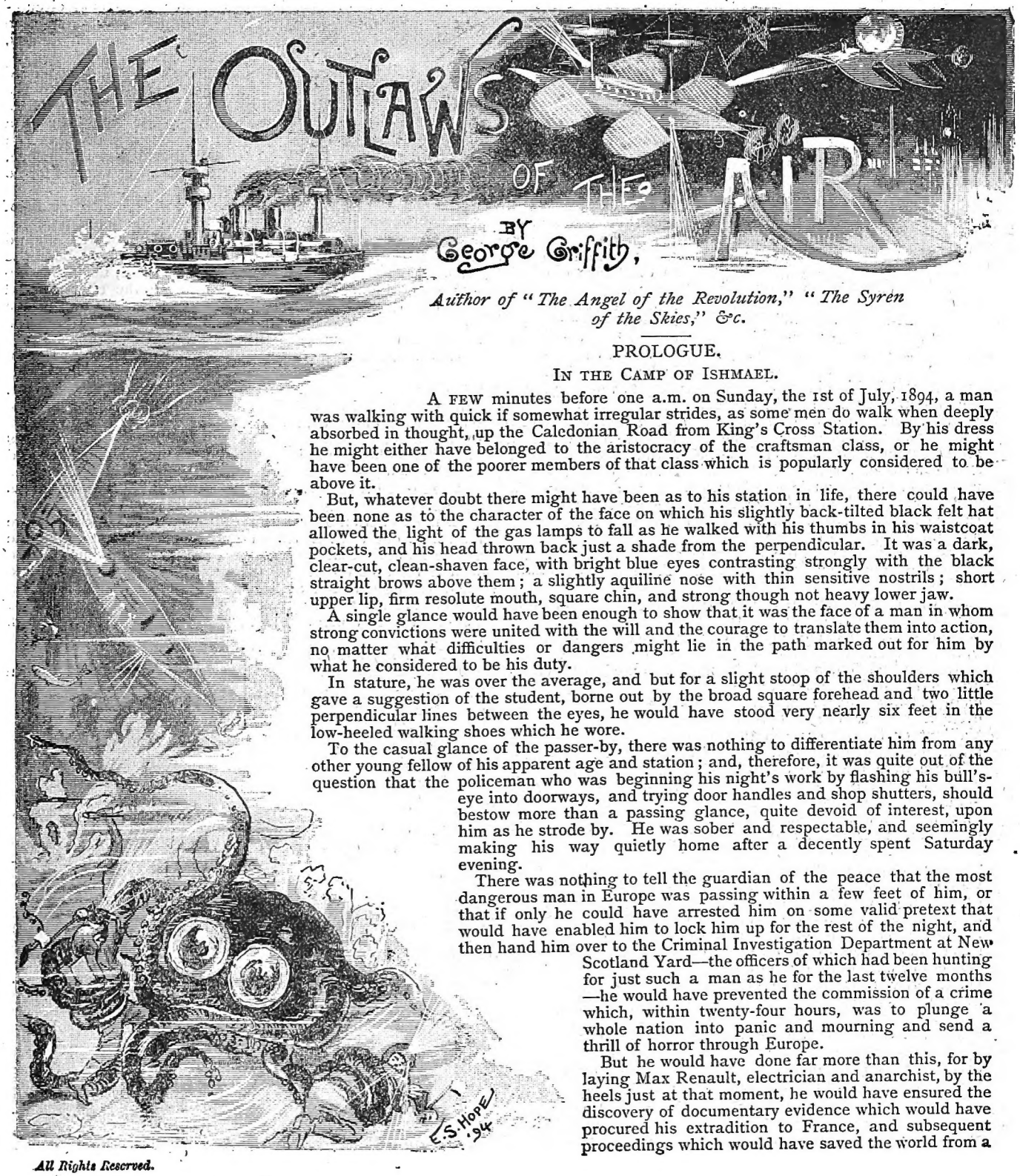

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

PROLOGUE.

IN THE CAMP OF ISHMAEL.

A FEW minutes before one a.m. on Sunday, the 1st of July, 1894, a man was walking with quick if somewhat irregular strides, as some men do walk when deeply absorbed in thought, up the Caledonian Road from King's Cross Station. By his dress he might either have belonged to the aristocracy of the craftsman class, or he might have been one of the poorer members of that class which is popularly considered to be above it.

But, whatever doubt there might have been as to his station in life, there could have been none as to the character of the face on which his slightly back-tilted black felt hat allowed the light of the gas lamps to fall as he walked with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, and his head thrown back just a shade from the perpendicular. It was a dark, clear-cut, clean-shaven face, with bright blue eyes contrasting strongly with the black straight brows above them; a slightly aquiline nose with thin sensitive nostrils; short upper lip, firm resolute mouth, square chin, and strong though not heavy lower jaw.

A single glance would have been enough to show that it was the face of a man in whom strong convictions were united with the will and the courage to translate them into action, no matter what difficulties or dangers might lie in the path marked out for him by what he considered to be his duty.

In stature, he was over the average, and but for a slight stoop of the shoulders which gave a suggestion of the student, borne out by the broad square forehead and two little perpendicular lines between the eyes, he would have stood very nearly six feet in the low-heeled walking shoes which he wore.

To the casual glance of the passer-by, there was nothing to differentiate him from any other young fellow of his apparent age and station; and, therefore, it was quite out of the question that the policeman who was beginning his night's work by flashing his bull's-eye into doorways, and trying door handles and shop shutters, should bestow more than a passing glance, quite devoid of interest, upon him as he strode by. He was sober and respectable, and seemingly making his way quietly home after a decently spent Saturday evening.

There was nothing to tell the guardian of the peace that the most dangerous man in Europe was passing within a few feet of him, or that if only he could have arrested him on some valid pretext that would have enabled him to lock him up for the rest of the night, and then hand him over to the Criminal Investigation Department at New Scotland Yard—the officers of which had been hunting for just such a man as he for the last twelve months—he would have prevented the commission of a crime which, within twenty-four hours, was to plunge a whole nation into panic and mourning and send a thrill of horror through Europe.

But he would have done far more than this, for by laying Max Renault, electrician and anarchist, by the heels just at that moment, he would have ensured the discovery of documentary evidence which would have procured his extradition to France, and subsequent proceedings which would have saved the world from a

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The most dangerous man in Europe.

reign of terror and an epoch of carnage and destruction in comparison with which the worst that society had so far learnt to fear from anarchy would prove to be the merest trifle.

But how was that most unimaginative and matter-of-fact of mortals, a British policeman, to know that in his waistcoat pocket he carried a foreign telegram which, properly interpreted, conveyed the intelligence that Caserio Santo was on his way to Lyons to await there the order in obedience to which he would with one stroke of his knife send a shudder through the civilised world; or how was he to divine that in the brain behind that open honest-looking brow, there were thoughts working which ere long might set the world in a blaze?

In St. Petersburg, or even in Paris, such a man would have been shadowed, his every movement would have been watched, all his comings and goings noticed, and at any moment—such a one as this, for instance—he might have been pounced upon and searched as a suspicious person, and assuredly, if he had been, the toils of the law would have closed about him in such fashion that little but a miracle could have set him free again.

But here in London, the asylum of anarchy and the focus of the most dangerous forces in the world, he went on his way unquestioned and unsuspected, for, although the police were morally certain that such a man existed, they had no idea as to his personality, no notion that this smart, good-looking young fellow, whose name had never been heard in connection even with such anarchist clubs as were known to have their quarters in London, and much less, therefore, with any of the crimes that had been laid to the charge of anarchy, was in reality even a greater criminal than Vaillant or Henry, or even the infamous Ravachol himself.

These were only the blind if willing tools, the instruments of political murder, the visible hands that obeyed the unseen brain, those who did the work and paid the penalty. But Max Renault was the brain itself, the intellect which conceived the plans for the execution of which the meaner and cheaper disciples of the sanguinary brotherhood of the knife and the bomb died on the scaffold or wore out their lives in penal prisons or the mines of Siberia.

In a word, he was the moving spirit and directing intellect of what was soon to become the most dreaded body of men and women in the world, but which was now only known to the initiated as "Autonomie Group Number 7."

But the stroke which, if his true character had been known, would have cut short his career, whether by rope or axe, would have done more than paralyse the brain which had plotted half the crimes that had been committed in the name of anarchy during the previous five years, and others in which the red hand had never been seen. It would have stopped his career at the most important moment of his life, and prevented him acting as the connecting link between two sets of circumstances which, though naturally of the utmost antagonism to each other, would, when united in such a personality as his, produce an explosion which might shake the world.

A few hundred yards past the top of the hill, Max turned sharply to the left, walked along a side street, turned to the right at the end of this, and went into another. Three minutes' quick walking brought him to the side door of a house which had a small timber yard on one side of it, and on the other a deserted beer-house, which had lost its license, and remained unoccupied because the premises were fit for no other kind of business.

The house itself had a low shop front, with the lower half of its windows painted a dull green, and on the upper part was an arc of white letters making the legend: "Social Club and Eclectic Institute." A lamp over the shop door bore the same inscription in white letters on blue glass, but the lamp was out now, for it was one of the rules of the club that all members should leave the premises not later than twelve o'clock at night on week-days and half-past eleven on Sundays.

This rule, however, seemed only to apply to a certain section of the members. After Max had opened the side door with his latch-key and ascended the stairs at the end of the passage, with a familiarity that enabled him to dispense with a light in the absolute darkness, he knocked at the door of an upstairs room which he found without the slightest hesitation. It was opened, and he found himself in the presence of four men and three women sitting round a table on which were the remains of what had evidently been a substantial and even luxurious supper.

Renault's action on entering the room was one which more than bore out what has been said of his character and the desperate work that he was engaged in. He acknowledged with a brief curt nod the salutations of the company, and then, putting his back against the door, he pulled his right hand out of his trouser pocket, and said, in a quiet almost well-bred voice which had just the faintest trace of a foreign accent:

"Victor Berthauld, sit still!"

There was a small slender-barreled six-chambered Colt in

His body shrank together and collapsed in a huddled heap.

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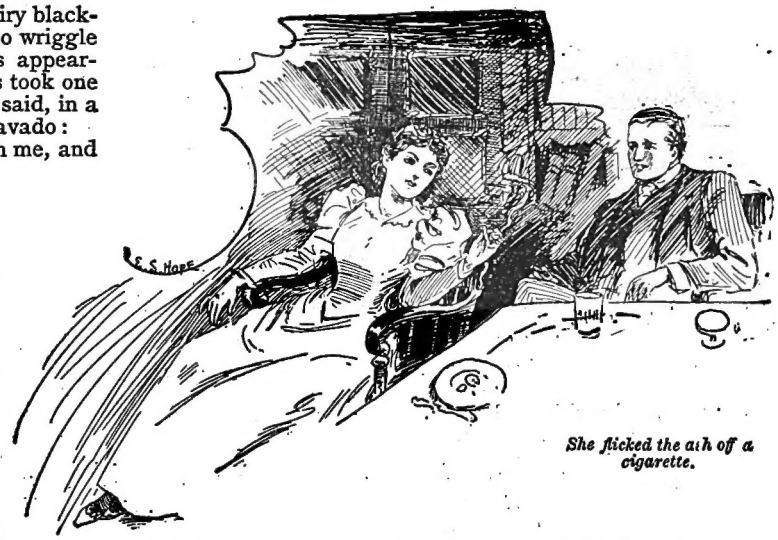
his hand, and the muzzle was pointed at a little lean wiry black-muzzled close-cropped Frenchman who had begun to wriggle uneasily in his seat the moment Max had made his appearance. His black eyes rolling in their deep sockets took one frightened glance from face to face, and then he said, in a voice to which he in vain tried to impart a tone of bravado:

"Well, Comrade Renault, what do you want with me, and what is that revolver drawn for?"

"Don't 'comrade' me, you little rat," said Max with a short savage laugh. "Tell me who tried to warn the Paris police that Carnot's life was in danger. Tell me who would have had Santo arrested at Marseilles if his telegram had only got into the hands it was intended for.

"Tell me who means to repeat the message to-morrow morning to Paris and Lyons, and who means to have this place raided by the English police at an inconvenient hour within the next week on the ground of unlawful gambling being permitted here. Tell me that, you dirty hound, and then I'll tell you, if you don't know, what we usually do with traitors."



She flicked the ash off a cigarette.

Berthauld sat for a moment speechless with fear. Then, with an imprecation on his lips, he leapt to his feet. Not a hand was moved to restrain him, but as he rose to his full height, Renault's arm straightened out, there was a crack and a flash, and a little puff of plaster reduced to dust, leapt out of the angle of the wall behind him; but before the bullet struck the wall it had passed through his forehead and out at the back of his head, his body shrank together and collapsed in a huddled heap in his chair, and Max, putting his pistol back into his pocket, said, just as quietly as before:

"It's a curious thing that even among eight of us we must have a traitor. I hope there aren't any more about. Take that thing down to the cellar, and then let us get to business; I've something important to tell you."

So saying, he walked round the table to a vacant arm-chair that stood at the end opposite the door, threw himself back in it, took out a cigar and lit it, and, with the same unshaken hand that a moment before had taken a fellow-creature's life, poured out a tumbler full of champagne from a bottle that stood half-empty beside him.

Meanwhile two of the men had risen from their seats. One of them tied a red handkerchief tightly round the dead man's skull, to stop what little bleeding there was from the two clean-cut wounds, and then the two picked him up, and without a word carried him out of the room.

"I hope I haven't shocked you by such a rough-and-ready administration of justice," said Max, half turning in his chair and addressing a girl who sat next to him on his right hand.

"No," said the girl. "It was obviously necessary. If half you charged him with is true he ought to have been crucified, let alone shot. I can't think what such vermin are made for."

And as she spoke she flicked the ash off a cigarette that she held between her fingers, put it between as dainty a pair of lips as ever were made for kissing, and sent a delicate little blue wreathing cloud up to mingle with the haze that filled the upper part of the room.

"And now, what is this interesting something that you have got to tell us, Monsieur Max?"

"All in good time, Ma'm'selle. I must ask you to wait until Casano and Rolland have come back; but meanwhile I will whet your curiosity by telling you I am thinking seriously of exiling myself for a couple of years or so."

As he said this he looked keenly from under his half lowered eyelashes into the girl's eyes, as if expecting or, perhaps, only half hoping for some sign of emotion.

Two dark fringed lids lifted suddenly for an instant, and then dropped again, and in that instant two liquid deep grey eyes, which before now he had seen grow almost black with passion, looked at him inquiringly. And that was all.

"That is news indeed," she said. "It must be something very important that takes Monsieur Max away from the scene of action at such a critical time as this."

"Yes," said Renault coldly, and with an almost imperceptible contraction of his brows, "it is important; so important, in fact, that I don't think I am exaggerating when I say that if I had not come back to-night, instead of to-morrow, and had given that fellow twelve hours more grace, the fate of the whole world would have been changed."

"What! The fate of the world!" said she half incredulously, while the others ceased their conversation and turned to listen to this strange passage of words.

"Yes," said Max, slightly raising his tone till it had a note of triumph in it, and at the same time bringing his hand down on hers, which was resting on the arm of her chair. The quick blood came to her cheeks and a flash of anger to her eyes, and she made an effort to withdraw it, but he held it fast, and, before she could speak, went on.

"Yes, Lea, if the venture that I am going to undertake turns out a success, I shall hold the fate of human society in my hand, just as I hold this pretty little hand of yours, only in a somewhat rougher grip, and then——."

"And then, Monsieur Max," interrupted the girl, snatching her hand away as the pressure of his relaxed for a moment. "I suppose you will have what you have not got now, the right to take what you want by the universal law of might."

"Yes," he said with another laugh, a somewhat more pleasant one this time. "And as I have the power so will I use it, whether in love or war. Are you agreed?"

Lea looked at him steadily for a moment, and then, with a swift flush overspreading as fair a face as ever man's eyes looked upon with love and longing, said in a low voice that had just a perceptible tremour in it:

"Yes, I suppose might is right after all, in love as well as war and nineteenth century society. He who can take can have; but, if you please, we will wait until you can take."

"Agreed!" he said. "That's a bargain—and now we'll get to business. Have you found Comrade Berthauld a quiet resting place?" he continued, addressing the two men who had just returned to the room.

"Yes," said Casano in his pleasant Italian tenor. "Ve haf gifen him a bath. I don't sink zere vill be very mooch left of him or his clothes by ze morning."

"Very well," said Max, taking some papers out of the breast pocket of his jacket. "Now sit down and listen."

They obeyed in silence, Casano first bolting the door.

"First," said Max, looking up from his papers and giving a quick glance at the expectant faces round the table, "Comrade Caserio Santo of the Cette Group has been chosen by lot to execute the sentence passed by this Group on the 6th of February on Sadi Carnot in return for the lives which he refused to spare. Santo will be at Lyons soon after daybreak. If that rat Berthauld had got out of this room alive, Santo would have been arrested and Carnot would have escaped. I have the proofs of his treachery here if you wish to

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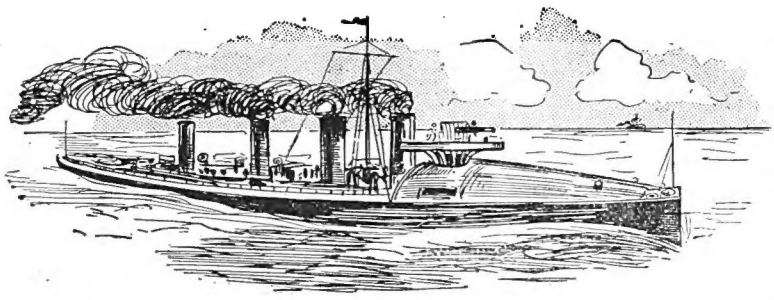


That gun-boat of yours.

see them. As it is, is it agreed that I shall direct him to offer our congratulations to M. le President on his visit to Lyons?"

He stopped and looked round the table again. The others nodded in silence, but Lea looked up with something like softness in her eyes, and said:

"What a pity! Poor Carnot is an excellent fellow in his bourgeois way, isn't he? Quite a model husband and father, incorruptible in politics and all that sort of thing. Wouldn't someone else do as well, say, Casimir-Pèrier or Dupuy? Incorruptible politicians are not so plentiful in France just now."

"The better the man the better the effect," said Max drily. "It is just as easy to strike high as a little lower. There are plenty of politicians in France, but only one President."

"Ja! dass is so," said a bright-faced, square-headed little German sitting opposite to Lea. "Strike high and hit hart. Dat is de way to make dese sheepsheads open dare mouths and stare when day reads de papers on Monday. Let Carnot go first, and den—well, den someone else. Dare are plenty of dem to spare."

A laugh followed this speech of Franz Hartog, who may as well be introduced here as elsewhere as the cleverest engineer in Europe and an anarchist heart and soul—if he had a soul, which some of his nearest acquaintances were very much inclined to doubt.

"Very well," said Lea. "I withdraw my objection, if, indeed, I ever had one."

The veto of one member, by the rules of the Group, would have been fatal to the execution of the proposal. As Lea withdrew hers she flicked some more ash off the end of her cigarette, and with it virtually fell the man whose death all Europe would be mourning within forty-eight hours.

"Then that is settled," said Max. "I will wire to Lyons the first thing in the morning. Now, Hartog, have you anything to tell us about this gun-boat of yours?"

"Ja, dot is all arranged. Her keel vill be laid on de slips next month. I have designed de engines mineself, and de speed contracted for by de firm with de Russian Government vill be thirty-five knots, and you can bet dat my engines vill make her do it. She vill make her private trial mit all her coal and arms and ammunition on board according to de contract, within eighteen monzs from now, and you can depend upon me to be on board her at de time with a suitable majority of de firemens and crew to do vat ve vants mit her.

"You can be sure, too, dat de oders vill have got someting inside dem that vill not make dem mooch good if we have to have a small scrimmage after all to get possession of de boat. Den ve vill rendezvous at the proper place, and den dere vill be some vild time on de Atlantic and de Cape routes ver dey bring de specie and de diamonds.

"Ja, you believe me, Monsieur Max and comrades, Franz Hartog vill make you de masters ov de sea, and you shall laugh at all de fleets of Europe ven dey try to catch you. Dat vill be anarchy vot vill be worth calling somdings. Ja, it is a great scheme and ve shall do it, you believe me."

The little German stopped and looked round the table rubbing his hands, and amidst the murmurs of approval that followed his speech, Max nodded laughingly to him and said:

"Yes, my friend, you are quite right. That is a great scheme, and if you can capture that little greyhound for us when she is built and armed you will have done more for anarchy and driven a bigger nail into the coffin of the tyranny of commercialism than ever any man did yet, and now I am going to tell you of a greater scheme than that."

"Greater as dot!" exclaimed the German, his steely blue eyes glittering through his spectacles with excitement. "How can any scheme be greater as dot?"

"Listen and you shall hear," said Max, "and I won't take very many words to tell you.

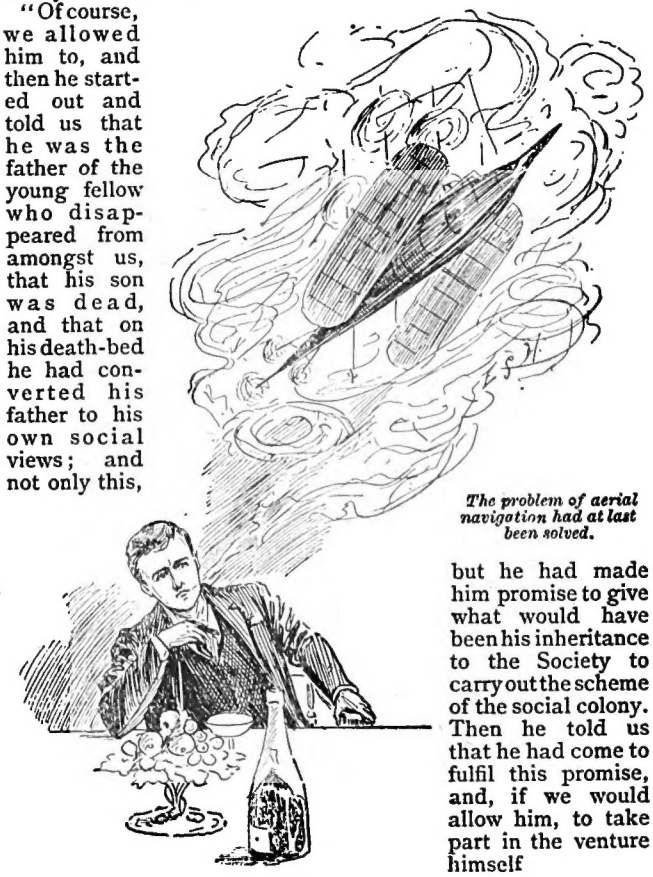
"Some years ago now, when I was a little more than a lad, and before I came to believe that there is no remedy for the present state of affairs except force and terrorism, I joined a society of amiable idiots who meet at each other's houses in different parts of London, and who call themselves the Brotherhood of the Better Life.

"I have kept up my membership, partly because it amused and interested me, and partly because I had a sort of idea that some day something might come of it. For a long time they have had a scheme on foot to emigrate to some out-of-the-way part of the world and start one of those social colonies which of course always come to grief in some way or another as the Freeland one has just done, but up to a few weeks ago they never had a chance of making a start for lack of money.

"Then, about a month ago, we had a regular romance, and something occurred that I would never have credited if it hadn't happened under my own eyes. Nearly six months ago one of our members who pretended to be a craftsman—but who was really nothing of the sort, for he was what they call a gentleman from head to foot—disappeared.

"For five months we heard nothing of him, and then, one night after a lecture by a sort of latter-day prophet of ours, a very clever but misguided fellow called Edward Adams, a stranger came out from the audience and asked to be allowed to say a few words.

"Of course, we allowed him to, and then he started out and told us that he was the father of the young fellow who disappeared from amongst us, that his son was dead, and that on his death-bed he had converted his father to his own social views; and not only this, but he had made him promise to give what would have been his inheritance to the Society to carry out the scheme of the social colony. Then he told us that he had come to fulfil this promise, and, if we would allow him, to take part in the venture himself



The problem of aerial navigation had at last been solved.

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"Well, we consented, on condition that he accepted the Constitution which we had been, as I always thought, playing at drawing up, and this he agreed to do, and then staggered us by saying how much he was prepared to devote to the carrying out of the scheme. We expected a few hundreds at most, perhaps just enough to give us a start with what we could get together of ourselves, so you can imagine what we felt like—and I in particular—when the figure came out at over a hundred thousand pounds."

"Ein hunderdt tousand pound!" cried Hartog, unable to restrain his enthusiasm. "Vi, I could build nearly three ships of thirty-five knots mit so mooch! Can you get hold of it, Monsieur Max?"

"I'm not going to get hold of that, friend Franz, but of something a good deal more important than money. It turned out that our fairy godfather was no other than Frederick Austen, the head of the big engineering firm of Austen and Son, of Queen Victoria Street and Woolwich. The death of his son has made it impossible for an Austen to succeed him in the business, and that, combined with his change of social views, has decided him to give up the business altogether.

"Of course, I needn't tell you that we accepted him and his money with thanks. But there was something stranger to come yet. Last night, at a meeting of the committee, of which I have the honour to be a member, he confided to us a secret which, as he said, would enable the colony not only to hold its own against any who might wish to interfere with it in case it prospered, but which will enable the colonists to enforce an object-lesson in peace, goodwill on earth, and all that sort of thing, on the first nations that go to war with each other, after they are in a position to wield the power that it will give them.

"Then"— and here Max Renault leaned forward on the table and instinctively lowered his voice while the others leant forward also to catch what was coming—"he told us that just before his last illness his son had completed a series of experiments which enabled him to say with truth that the problem of aerial navigation had at last been solved, and that he had solved it.

"He told the secret to his father, and he at once placed all the resources of his business at his disposal, and, comrades, believe me or believe me not, as you like, but I tell you that less than twenty-four hours ago I saw in action a working model of a flying ship which Frederick Austen is going to build with my assistance in the Brotherhood's New Utopia."

A murmur half of amazement and half of incredulity ran from lip to lip as Renault uttered these momentous words, and Lea suddenly straightened herself up in her chair, stretched her shapely arms upward, and then, folding her hands behind her head, looked at Max with undisguised admiration in her eyes, and said, with a ring of exultation in her voice:

"Ah, now I understand you, after wondering all this time what your parable was going to lead up to. Excellent, Monsieur Max, excellent! You have not been playing the Anarchist wolf in the Socialist sheepskin for nothing. You will emigrate with these good folks to their New Utopia, wherever they may find it, absorb such ideas as may be useful, appoint yourself aërial engineer to that excellent converted capitalist, and then——"

"Yes, and then," said Max, with a significant movement of his hand towards the pocket that contained his revolver, "when the Cruiser of the Air is built and equipped, and I have satisfied myself of her working power, she will be found missing some fine morning, and so shall I.

"I'm not going to exile myself with a lot of people like that for nothing, I can tell you. If I'm the man I take myself for, within three years from now that air ship shall carry the red flag through the clouds and terrorise the whole earth from East to West and Pole to Pole.

"And now," he continued, rising to his feet, under the stimulus of his own words. "If you've any more champagne, fill up. I've a toast for you. For another year or two you must carry on the work without me, or stop it altogether as seems best to you, and meanwhile you, Hartog, shall get your thirty-five knot sea-devil afloat and to business till you've levied ocean tolls enough to give us funds to build an aerial fleet on the model of the ship that I'll bring you, and then we'll have no more hole-and-corner assassinations and no more pettifogging bomb-throwing. We'll declare war—war to the knife, on the world that we hate, and that hates and fears us, and then——"

"Here's your glass, my Lord of the Air that is to be," said Lea, rising and handing him a full tumbler of champagne with a gesture of deference that was not altogether assumed. "And so let us have your toast."

"You shall have it, short and sweet," said Max, taking the glass and lifting it above his head. "Here's life to those we love, and death to those we hate—*Vive l'Anarchie* and the Outlaws of the Air!"

"Mein Gott, but dat is a great scheme! He vill set de vorld on fire if he only comes properly to bass," said Franz Hartog, as he drained his glass at a gulp, and then stood gazing at Max Renault with a look that was almost one of worship in his little twinkling eyes.

(To be continued next week.)

THE LITTLE FROCK.

YES, she would do. She could start in work as soon as she liked, money to be paid on the piece-work system, and hours eight in the morning, sharp, till seven at night, with an hour for dinner and half an hour for tea; instant dismissal on the first sign of intoxication while at work, and suspension of work in the case of foul language or bad conduct.

The chief clerk lowered his head and continued his writing, and the little woman went out of the room into the shed where a dozen rough, red-armed females spent their days in sorting rags at starvation wages. The foreman listened to what she had to say, and then curtly gave her instructions.

A bale of tattered garments was put for her, alongside some baskets, and she had got to sort them.

"Tuck up yer sleeves. Look smart."

She flushed, then rolled up the calico and displayed a pair of thin, white arms.

"*You* won't be 'ere long," this from the foreman, prophetically, as he turned on his heel and sauntered away.

The eyes of the other women, which had been directed at the newcomer during the conversation, fell simultaneously as the foreman moved round, and a dozen pairs of temporary idle arms moved rapidly from basket to basket.

During the dinner hour she went away alone. The other women loafed about the premises and washed down their chunks of bread with tea, and talked scandal, with the little woman for the subject.

"Seems stuck up. Givin' 'erself airs."

"Lor'; she'd better not start them tricks; it don't pay."

Then, one of them, a tidier woman than the rest, with a thin, sunken face, mildly suggested, in a deliberate tone, that perhaps the new hand hadn't got anything to eat.

Next day she applied for the money that was due to her for her previous day's work, and, although it was against the regulations of the establishment to pay otherwise than at the end of the week, the chief clerk made an exception in her case, provided she held her tongue about it.

That dinner hour she went and got some food and came and ate it with the other women. She tried to be sociable, and after her meal seemed a lot better and stronger.

Things went on for a fortnight, during which time she found

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considerable favour with the women, because, as her fingers and arms became accustomed to the work, she did it more quickly than anybody, and, what was more estimable in their eyes, she always spent the bigger portion of her money in drinks round.

They liked her for that, for she never let a drop pass between her own lips, although she talked and chatted with them all in the bar.

One day, however, she took a half pint of bitter. It was on a Saturday night, when most of them were flush of money. She called for gin after that, and at closing time they had to carry her out and let her lie in the road.

Monday morning she turned up at the shed, the traces of her debauchery still visible on her face, which was even whiter and more pinched than it had ever been. At first she seemed inclined to drop her head and avoid the looks of her fellow workers, as if in shame; but, as they took no notice and made no mention of the affair, to them so familiar in the squalid misery in which they dragged out their existence, she was herself again before the dinner hour.

Next Saturday it was the same—worse, perhaps. For some reason or other she let temper get the better of her, and the most violent woman in that select band, if not in the whole neighbourhood, was mild compared with her. She began by swearing, and left off by fighting outside the public-house. No woman ever made such a brute of herself, to the certain knowledge of the barman and of the policeman who moved her on, purposely oblivious to her state.

In spite of these Saturday night eruptions, in spite of the debilitating effect they naturally produced upon her constitution, she kept pluckily to her work throughout the week, earning a larger return than any of the other women employed in that place.

At times she would scarcely speak a word to any of them for a whole day, sitting away from their circle at meal times, and staring hard on the ground as if her mind dwelt on some point in her life which was sweet for her to think of; for, during these periods, a soft expression would come over her face, and sometimes they would see, or fancy they saw, her eyes wet.

They cared for her less now than they had when she used to stand drinks instead of tippling the whole of her money away herself; besides which, she was getting more stuck-up and reticent, except when anyone started to argue with her on a Saturday night in the "Grey Bounder." Then her arrogance gave place to degradation, and the foulest language poured out from between her lips as easily as the gin had been poured down.

The other women were frightened of her, all but those whose condition resembled her own. They endeavoured to get her discharged, and, wholly indifferent to her future, told the foreman all that regularly happened on Saturday nights.

It did not affect him, however, he said. They had better mind their own business. So she continued to work on.

The effect of the work upon her garments was such that in the course of a few months her dress was in an abominably filthy state and almost in rags. For a few shillings she was able to buy another of her employer from among those she sorted. All the women selected their garments in the same way, and from among the thousands that passed through their hands they had a good choice.

But the new dress of the little woman ill-fitted her form. She looked bedraggled, miserably untidy, and the certain amount of care which she had at first exercised with regard to her personal appearance was gone. The wan, drawn face became red and bloated, the arms developed till the muscles, hard and stiff, showed clearly through the blotched skin.

She was going to the bad fast, they said.

One day a woman said:

"Lawks, this is a purty frock." She was holding aloft a child's gown of cream cashmere, greasy and well worn.

A couple of the others went over and examined it critically.

"Yus, do fur my Sal."

"Fine 'mbroidery on it. Some kid from the hupper suckles, I suppose."

The little woman was staring from her place with contracted brows towards the group, and then, as if impelled by some sudden power, she walked rapidly over and joined them.

No one noticed her until she reached out and snatched the frock from the holder's grasp.

"I'm going to have this," and turning she went over to the foreman and asked what he wanted for it.

"It's a good 'un," he said, eyeing it critically, and turning it over in his hands. "Can't let you have it for less than two bob."

She folded it carefully, and agreed to the price, and he made a note of her debt on a slip of paper.

At the end of the day it was found that she had got through less work than she ever had before, not excepting the first hours of her employment at the sorting sheds. She seemed strangely glad when the hands of the clock, hung on the rafters, pointed over the cracked face to seven. The cream frock had not left her side from the moment it had become her property, and all through the afternoon she had cast yearning glances at the faded and greasy fabric that, at one time, had given warmth to the body of some little child, some daughter of society.

Whose child? The dull, ignorant women whom Fate had made her fellow workers discerned no association between the sad face, sadder than ever, and the little cream frock. They wondered in a vague, unreasoning way, for whom she wanted this garment, as, to their certain knowledge, she had no children of her own living with her, nor was she in any way particularly indulgent with other folks' little ones.

But, had they once, in some byegone years, lived and moved in places at which they now stared with open-mouthed astonishment and admiration, drinking in the views of luxury and ease to which their eyes and ears treated them; had they known the kind fond voice of a noble man whispering love into their ears in the midst of the palm-filled conservatory; had they drooped their heads and blushed in return; had they stood before the altar in a large grand church through which floated the sweetest music from the organ all in their praise; had they pressed to their bosom a little baby girl, who, in the course of years, filled the fine mansion in Belgravia with her laughter and merry prattle; had they feasted their devoted eyes on the little one clothed in her new cream frock; had they fallen from the highest pinnacle of this state of bliss and of intense happiness to poverty in one short month; had they despaired at the sight of the little one's sufferings and, weak-minded, sought solace in the stupor of drunkenness; had they been turned by a heart-broken husband from the little struggling home, from the darling of their mother's heart, from all they loved and cherished; had they sought to support themselves by honourable work; had they fallen, at the moment of success, to the hands of the devil again; had they in the course of their work (merciless coincidence!) found and held in their hands the little cream frock that they had sold in a moment of frenzy to obtain the means to purchase the baneful sorrow-drowner; had they experienced all this and much more, they would have wondered less, and given all their womanly sympathy to the little woman who lay that night tossing upon a sleepless bed of straw, and clasping a little cream frock passionately to her heart.

Next morning she was not at her accustomed place in the work-shed, nor did she arrive at all during the day; and the foreman at seven o'clock struck her name off the book, and prepared for the customary row on the morrow when the little woman, barely recovered from a wild debauch, should present herself at the door for admission, as other women had done before her.

But there was no need for this preparation. She had gone out in the morning, the first floor lodger said, and she had come back, but beyond that she knew nothing, only that during the night she had been "snivelling a lot."

The dying rays of the summer sun shot through the grimy window of the attic and pointed out to them the little woman white and cold on the bed of straw, her pinched face less pinched, and bearing a calmer and softer expression than they had ever seen upon it.

And they wondered why the little cream frock that was gripped so tightly in her arms should have induced her to go out and buy the bottle of rat poison that stood on the floor by the bedside.

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ALL the other actors of the company began to assemble on the stage for the closing tableau, the leading man began to manœuvre for his pose at L.C., where he was to voice the epigrammatic sentiment that gave the name to the play; and the escorts in the audience, heroically foregoing the finale, commenced to get together their ladies' wraps, fans, and opera glasses. The Babe poked Desfield with the handle of his cane, and said: "Let's get out of here before the crush."

Desfield picked up his programme from beneath the seat, where it had fallen, and put it in his pocket. He always made it a point to save his programmes. On the lower shelf of his clothes-cupboard at home he had made a pile that could be measured by feet.

Then he nodded to the Babe, and the two rose from their seats, Desfield very distantly conscious of the implied rudeness to the performers. The curtain, the original red curtain that had been down before the first act, fell just as they reached the end of the passage, amid hurried and doubtful applause, and whistles from the gallery. The house-lights were suddenly turned on, and the orchestra struck up a lively quick step.

It had been a *matinée*. They came out of the gloom of the theatre, which smelt of stale gas and plush upholstery, into the streets again. Desfield felt as though he were in a manner passing from one play to another, only with the difference that in this latter he was at once actor, author, and audience.

"Let's go somewhere and eat something," exclaimed the Babe, as they turned up the street. Desfield, as he instinctively reached for the middle part of his cane, cast a glance of some surprise at the Babe. He had not expected this. *She* had been in the first row of the dress circle with her mother, and Desfield had supposed that the unconscionable Babe would hang round the exit in order to see them to their carriage, and thus give Her a chance to ask him home to dinner.

But the Babe did nothing of this; he was a changed man to-day; he had moped all through the play, taking only the head of his stick into his confidence and his mouth, and, now that the play was over, skulked away from the theatre as soon as he could.

Desfield forbore to question. He knew that whatever was the ferment in the Babe's mind, it would sooner or later reach the boiling point, and bubble over in a prolonged recital of grievances.

This was precisely what did occur that very evening as they put their legs under the dainty table in the dining-room of their club. Desfield did not know whether the Johannisberger (1864) strengthened the Babe's impulse in the direction of unreserved intercourse between himself and his chum, or whether it weakened the barriers that the Anglo-Saxon throws before the spontaneous outburst of his more sentimental emotions; but whether the impulse was too strong, or the barriers too weak, out it came, and with admirable good humour Desfield submitted to listen to the endless chapters of lamentations of this new Jeremiah.

She had jilted him—thrown him over. You see, it was this way: the Babe had gone to call upon her on a certain day, and had found her (paradoxically) not at home. Then he had written her a neat little note asking if he might come on the following Sunday afternoon, and by return post she had told him that he might.

"And when I go up there," continued the Babe with a wail, "I find the Other Fellow coming away, who tells me, with a grin on his confounded face, that he's just been there, and that she's not at home. Now I just ask you——" and the Babe closed with a burst of indignation.

"I don't care, though," he added when he had finished, with his hands deep in his pockets, and rolling his head from side to side—"I don't care. If she can get along without me, I can make out all right. Let's see how she'll like the Other Fellow; that's all."

The next afternoon, at Somebody's tea, Desfield and the Babe saw her with the Other Fellow. She cut him dead. Oh, but it was one of those flat, unequivocal cuts, that was like a slap in the face.

"That's all right," said the Babe bravely, even if his chin would twitch, "did you see the look I gave her? Oh, I gave her a l——k."

The split was absolute after this. She sent back her picture that the Babe had copied for her from a photograph, and he returned the scented necktie-holder that she had embroidered for him. She became feverishly gay—was out somewhere every night. The Babe began to speak of life and youth as though they were spelt with capitals, and to talk of going abroad.

Things had reached this stage when Society took up illustrated lectures. It became a fad. It was rather peculiar too that the ladies of Society should have patronised them, because the Egyptian darkness that was the necessary adjunct to the lectures, precluded any possibility of gratifying the desire "to be seen of men." One particularly spiteful sheet gave it out that some people went, not in spite of the darkness, but because of it, which was, to be sure, very churlish.

But, however, they went in "numbers numberless." The lectures were upon European Travel, illustrated by magic-lantern photographs of all points of interest. In order to be consistent with his unconcealed intentions of foreign travel, the Babe was obliged to attend, and rarely missed a lecture.

Desfield was one of the ushers. Desfield always did seem to find his little niche in everything of this kind that was going on. In tennis tournaments he was apt to be chosen as scorer. In athletic contests for charity, he was always to be found upon the field in some semi-official capacity. At weddings he was best man.

At the club on ladies' night he was on the receiving committee; at cotillons he was generally leader. Somehow or other, those people that made up Desfield's "set" found they could not well navigate in the troubled waters of Society

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unless they felt Desfield's hand either at the wheel or upon the ropes.

The lectures were held at Oddfellows' Hall. There were but two a week; one on Monday evening, the other on Saturday afternoon. Admittance was by invitation only, and the price of seats was high. It was a select affair generally.

On the last Saturday afternoon of the series, reserved for Paris and its environs, Desfield found his hands full. The audience had never been so large or so fashionable. Until nearly half-an-hour after the lecture had begun, he was kept running up and down the aisle of which he had charge, seating the late comers, and this after the hall was darkened was no easy matter. She with the Other Fellow were among the last to come in. The few remaining chairs were soon taken, and Desfield's work was done. Those coming in any later were obliged to stand.

She and the Other Fellow had been with the latest comers. They were not, however, the last. The Babe was the last. The lecture was nearly half over when he came in, and finding Desfield, leaned up against the wall with him in the listless and melancholy manner which was now—poor beggar—not all affected.

"I'm off next week, Thursday, Desfield," he whispered after a while. "Got my ticket this morning."

Desfield was really sorry for him. "Hard lines, old man, isn't it?" he said.

The masculine emotion of these latter days can go no further than this. When the *fin de siècle* gentleman calls his friend "Old Man," he has figuratively fallen upon his neck and kissed him. Beyond this he cannot go, with dignity. The Babe felt and appreciated this, and loved Desfield accordingly; he would have liked to clasp him around the neck, or to have wrung his hands, and in the surrounding darkness could have done so without fear and without reproach; but instead he only shifted his position against the wall, and, in answer more to what Desfield implied than to what he said, returned:

"It's very good of you, old man."

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," went on the lecturer, turning from side to side, and occasionally silhouetting his head against the brilliant circular focus on the curtain, like the transit of a planet across the sun—"and now, turning from this marvel of engineering skill" (he had been talking about the Eiffel Tower), "which like the skeleton of the Tower of Babel, stands like a monument to the sky-aspiring ambition of mankind—turning from this, let us take one of those large and lumbering omnibuses drawn by those heavy white horses, a sight so characteristic of the streets of Paris." Here a picture of the sight was thrown upon the curtain. "We mount upon the top, are carried across the river, *viâ* the Pont de Jena, down through the beautiful Champs Elysées,

They drank champagne together.

and in a few moments emerge upon one of the most beautiful, as well as one of the most historic, squares in the world—the Place de la Concorde."

He pressed a little tick-tack between his fingers, and the picture of the omnibus seemed in a manner to dissolve into a view of the square. He paused a moment for effect, and then proceeded—"We now stand upon ground where history has been made and unmade. In the distance, across the river, is the Chamber of Deputies. In the immediate foreground rises the Egyptian Obelisk, a single block of granite." He plunged into statistics with ferocious relish: "Seventy-five feet six and one-half inches in height, weighing ten thousand tons, and transported from Egypt at the cost of seven million one hundred thousand francs."

Desfield was troubled. He was not listening to the lecturer's flow of periodic English, but was thinking of the Babe and his miseries. That the Babe was hard hit, he knew now beyond any doubt. What effect it was to have upon him was less certain, and therefore more conducive to anxiety. The two had been chums ever since their college days, and had always been everywhere, and done everything together. Now that the Babe was about to leave for the continent, for anywhere, Desfield felt in anticipation like a *corps sans âme*.

"And surrounded," continued the lecturer, "by four magnificent fountains, throwing jets twenty-seven feet high, and pouring out daily seventeen thousand gallons of water."

Then, too, he was almost sure that She loved the Babe very much indeed, and that her encouragement of the Other Fellow was a pretence and a sham. It did seem supremely silly that these two little children should spoil their whole lives by a quarrel over the most trivial thing in the world.

"Groups of beautiful statuary at the four angles representing the four principal cities of the nation."

It had always been a settled thing with Desfield that the two should eventually be married, and he had been accustomed to pose before himself as the friend of the household in future days, dining with them *en famille*, or spending a cosy evening at their fireside. He felt keenly disappointed over this failure of his little romance.

"Measuring six and one half feet, over a mile in circumference."

Desfield wondered if anything could be done—if he could do anything.

"Six hundred dekametres."

The Babe had moved to a little distance, having found a vaguely appropriate seat upon a cold hot-water pipe.

Somebody in one of the forward seats got up, and came down the aisle. As his figure emerged into the scant circle of light thrown by the lowered gas jets that burned on either side of the door, Desfield saw that it was the Other Fellow.

"Whew!" said the Other Fellow, as he came within whispering distance of Desfield. "Can't stand this any longer. Had to excuse myself to Her, and come out and have a peg. Come with me, won't you?"

Desfield thought this was very like the Other Fellow, but an idea suddenly occurred to him. He said: "All right; you go along, and I'll come after you as soon as I can get my overcoat."

The Other Fellow went out, and Desfield turned to the Babe, who was still sitting on the warming apparatus, oblivious to everything. Desfield woke him up, saying, "Come on, I have a seat for you." Then he piloted him softly down the passage and placed him in the seat the Other Fellow had just vacated, beside Her.

As the Babe sat down, they recognised each other. The Babe turned quickly. "Oh, I say, Desfield," he said. But Desfield was already gone, saying to himself, "Leave 'em alone for half-an-hour in a dark room, side by side—with no chance of escape—with nothing or nobody to come between 'em, and if something don't turn up it will be because they are a different kind of people to what I take them to be.'

He had now to direct all his wits to keeping the Other Fellow out of the way. For an instant he had the idea of getting him drunk, but he grimly reflected that a gun of that calibre would probably kick about as far as it would shoot.

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He went out blinking into the glare of the afternoon sun, and found the Other Fellow waiting for him at an adjacent bar. They drank champagne together. Desfield was as long about it as he could be, then inveigled the Other Fellow to the lunch counter, and dawdled over olives and caviar, talking about the 'Varsity Cricket Match, and Henley. Desfield knew the Babe had about twenty minutes more. They had already gone from the lecture-room about ten minutes.

By this, he thought, they must have got over the coldly-polite stage, and have come to mutual recriminations. He asked the Other Fellow to have another, with *him* this time. Then once more back to the lunch-counter, for another ten minutes. "Now, they're about coming round to explanations," thought Desfield. He wished that the Other Fellow were subject to epileptic fits, or could be drugged, or quietly knocked on the head. They left the room and started to return.

As the white-painted valves of the doors of the bar-room flapped back and forth behind them, they both heard a sudden noise that made them pause to listen. There is no more mistaking the bark of an angry dog than the hoof-beats of a runaway horse; there is a savagery, a viciousness, about it, that can be instantly distinguished from the ordinary canine utterance.

The noise came from a sort of blind-alley, hardly more than a deep recess, just behind the saloon. It was followed by a snarl, and a hoarse yelp in another key, and then a rapid succession of fierce, brutal noises, and the sound of furred bodies striking and rolling upon the ground.

The Other Fellow already had out a couple of five-pound notes, and was shaking them across the ring.

"A dog-fight," cried the Other Fellow with great delight, putting his hat on the back of his head. "Must take this in," and he ran up to where the crowd was already formed in a circle. Desfield followed him, looking at his watch. "Now they're about finished with explanations, and have started to make it up. The dog-fight is a special dispensation of Providence—they've about ten minutes more."

And when he saw the two dogs he perceived with unholy joy that the fight promised to hold out a good deal more than ten minutes, and he knew that the Other Fellow would stay as long as it lasted.

By the time that Desfield got sight of them, the two dogs were silent—they had already become "locked." The bull-terrier had a left-leg hold, while the Newfoundland, holding on temporarily to his adversary's ear, was gradually working for a grip at his throat. The Other Fellow already had out a couple of five-pound notes, and was shaking them across the ring at the large dog's owner, offering seven to ten. He seemed to be in his element. "Poor sport," said Desfield to himself, with great disgust.

"Isn't this beautiful?" said the Other Fellow to Desfield, rubbing his hands. "What a pity cats always fight in the night so you can't see 'em. Seven to ten on the bull, you over there!"

All at once the large dog let go, and made for a new hold. The instant the bull felt himself free, he slipped his jaws upward, from the fore-leg up along the shoulder-blade, along the shoulder itself, and then suddenly closed them, vice-like, sunk them in the soft part of the throat—all without a sound. "It's all over but the shouting now," cried the Other Fellow.

In a few minutes this would be true of the lecture as well.

"I think," said Desfield to himself, "that they should now have come to the most interesting part of all. They have about four more minutes." Then he looked at the Newfoundland; some men were vainly trying to pry the bull's teeth apart with a stout stick. "The bull won't kill him before four minutes, anyhow," thought Desfield. He waited till the Other Fellow's back was turned, then slipped over to the hall.

"Strange," he said, "that their future happiness should depend upon a dog-fight, and upon the strength of a bull-terrier's jaws. If the bull can only hold on for five more minutes they'll make it up, and get married."

By the time he had got the carriage to the door, the lecture was over, and the crowd began to stream out.

"Maybe the scheme failed after all," thought Desfield.

She came out on the Babe's arm. Both were nervously looking for the Other Fellow. Desfield made up to them.

"That's all right," he cried. "He's interested—elsewhere—just now, and your carriage is here waiting for you."

The Babe leaned out of the carriage window and wrung his hand. "You don't know of anyone, do you, Desfield, that want's to buy a Cunard ticket at a discount?"

"Oh, Mr. Desfield!" she began.

Through the window, on the other side of the carriage, Desfield caught sight of the Other Fellow hurrying distractedly round the corner.

"Where to?" he asked, interrupting her. Then, as he got her answer, he banged the carriage door, and looking up to the coachman said:

"Home, James."

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THE SILVER-STRINGED LUTE.

ONE! TWO! THREE! The soft-toned bells in the cathedral pealed forth the Angelus, and for a brief space the restless life of the city was still. Men stood with uncovered heads, women in prayerful attitudes—even the little beggar children ceased for the while their importunities. Only a moment; then all was merry and noisy again. Yet the brief season of prayer was not without its influence.

The scene was a familiar one to Will Harcourt. Yet it had not lost its extreme picturesqueness to his English eyes. The low houses, the gilt spires of the cathedral glistening in the evening sun, still possessed for him a peculiar charm. Black-robed priests gliding noiselessly, gaily dressed men and women, some on foot and some in the gorgeously liveried vehicles belonging to the aristocracy, little beggar children, whose alluring eyes never failed to coax the desired coin from his pockets, passed him, all hurrying to the plaza, from which the strains of the band already floated. There all the gossip of the day would be retailed, business discussed, and lovers obtain a sight of their inamorata, a smile, a rosebud, or, perhaps, even a hastily whispered word should the watchful eyes of the duenna be, for the moment, turned away.

It was now two years since the sign "Harcourt & Co., Chemists," had appeared over one of the quaint shops in the Calle Hidalgo, and both Harcourt and Ralph Swain, his friend and partner, had come to be liked and respected among the prominent Mexican gentlemen of the city. And not only did the sterner sex regard him with favour, but many a soft glance was cast after the handsome young Englishman as he strolled more slowly along the crowded streets toward the quiet portion of the city, where he and his friend had taken a small adobe dwelling.

Will Harcourt, however, was not thinking of the dark-eyed maids of Mexico, fair as they seemed. Against their smiles and fascinations he was proof. Truth to tell, a little maid in Cheshire held his heart, and his thoughts, his love, his work, were all for her. The story was a common one; they had met, loved, agreed to marry; but adverse circumstances, in the shape of financial difficulties, prevented, and they parted —Harcourt seeking Mexico, where he hoped to make his fortune. And it was upon this he was musing as he stopped at the post-office for his weekly letter, which was handed to him with a smile by the courteous official.

All of Harcourt's friends knew of his hopes and sympathised with him, while they admired the sturdy faithfulness and honour which made him true in every thought to the lady of his love and blind to the allurements of the gay Mexican city.

He was still thinking pleasantly of his letter as, the evening meal over, he settled down in the cool patio to smoke. Good humouredly refusing all invitations of his friend to "come out and enjoy himself," he felt rather relieved when that gentleman took his departure for his usual evening tour of the city. Mr. Swain had fallen an easy victim to the Southern beauties; and clandestine appointments, as well as skilful eludings of duennas, were with him a speciality.

Harcourt's meditations were exceedingly agreeable. Pacing slowly up and down the court, scenes and memories brought to mind by the letter he had just received, crowded upon him, and he thought with satisfaction that his promotion was nearly at an end. He had not toiled in vain; respected and prosperous as he had become, he knew that before the year was over he would be reunited to the girl he had waited for so long—a man she might well love and honour. Her face rose before him as he had seen it last, the brown eyes filled with tears, while the lips smiled bravely. The years that had passed seemed long and dark, the future bright.

Suddenly he was aroused from his musing by the sound of music, far away, yet near, and full of such surpassing sweetness that he stood spellbound. It was a lute touched by a master hand and accompanied by a woman's voice.

He glanced round. The door that led to the street was open, and the great dog lay peacefully in the passage. The sound did not come, then, from any serenading party, and as it continued he noted that it came muffled, as if through a wall.

On the left was the city prison; it could not come from there. On the right was a deserted dwelling, the former home of one Don José Flores, who, in a passion of jealous rage, had stabbed a rival and fled from justice to the mountains, where he had become the leader of a dangerous gang of bandits. The house and property had been confiscated, and the government seal was still on the gate. Yet the music seemed to come from this direction, and he heard it most plainly when he paused in front of an unused door, covered now by a luxurious rose vine, but which, he knew, connected with the passage leading to the Flores garden.

He stood still and listened. Soft and sweet came the sounds, thrilling him in every nerve. Something impelled him to follow them, and he pushed aside the tangled vine, opening with some difficulty the door, which turned slowly on its iron hinges.

As he had surmised, it led into a passage connecting with the neighbouring garden, which was surrounded by a high fence and filled with overgrown vines and bushes. No light came from the house, but he could hear the sound more plainly now, and guided by it he pushed open a door, then stood back amazed at his own temerity.

The door opened softly. As he had guessed it corresponded to the one in his own house and led into the patio.

The place was dark, except at one end, where a quaint silver lamp was fastened into the angles of the adobe wall. The perfume of the roses came to him, and palms and potted plants were arranged round the sides, all speaking of habitation in the place which was supposed by everyone to be deserted.

Nor was this all. The light from the lamp fell upon a woman who half reclined on a couch covered with panther skins. It was she whose voice Harcourt had heard, and it came to him sweetly and clearly as he stood there, unable to move hand or foot.

Her clinging robe of black, confined at the waist by a silver chain, left revealed the beauty of her neck and arms, and the lamp, as it flickered in the draught, gleamed on the red gold of her hair like a living flame. Her long, black lashes lay like shadows on her cheek as she sat, with head bent a little forward, picking at the lute she held.

Harcourt, unable to take his eyes from her beauty, felt a strange sensation creeping over him as he stood silent in the shadow. Something warned him to retrace his steps, yet he felt powerless to do so. Suddenly, as if to make the decision for him, the door behind him flew to with a resounding slam, and the lady started up.

Fearing that she might be alarmed, Harcourt stepped quickly forward.

"Pardon me," he said in Spanish, "I heard the singing, and something urged me to seek the singer. For my intrusion, fair one, you must blame this," and he touched the lute which lay on her knees, then stopped, astonished at himself. In three years he had not spoken in this strain to any woman.

She raised her eyes. They were dark as midnight, soft as the velvet pansy-leaves, tender, compelling, inscrutable. From the moment that Harcourt looked into their liquid depths he knew but one desire, and that, never to look away.

"Intrusion? No," she answered; "you are welcome, for I know you, Don Cullermo, and have often watched you. It is lonely here."

"Then may I stay," he asked persuasively, "and hear you sing again?"

She drew aside her dress and made room for him beside her. "I am Amorita Flores," she told him, "the sister of

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Don José. Sometimes I am with him and sometimes I am compelled to remain here, but keep it secret. It is a dreary life, señor; I would die if it were not for my lute."

Harcourt did not answer. Leaning back against the panther skins, he gazed dreamily into the star-set sky. A vision of Madeline floated across his mind, and, with a sudden resolution, he started up; but, encountering the eyes of Amorita, he hesitated, then sank slowly back again.

"It is a relic," she went on, in her soft, languorous voice; "it belonged to a troubador, and 'tis said that when he willed he could draw the hearts of man and maid from their breasts by its sweetness. See, the strings are all of silver, not one has ever broken. 'Tis said that when one breaks, the spell goes also."

"A dangerous weapon," answered Harcourt, lightly; "yet I court the danger. Sing again."

Smiling, she touched the strings, while Harcourt sat with half-closed eyes, his hand, which had fallen on her shoulder, resting there unrebuked. He felt a sort of faint surprise at himself, but it was dim and far away. He was content to be beside this beautiful woman in the soft Mexican night. Past and future, all faded; he was passive to her charming.

Her voice died away in a sweet, lingering note, and the lute softly slid to the ground. She leaned nearer, until her silky hair brushed his face. His hand crept round her neck, and, emboldened by her silence, he bent and kissed her throat.

Her lips drooped, but Harcourt started up suddenly, resolutely throwing off the spell. He pushed her from him. "No, I will not!" he exclaimed. "By heaven, I will not!"

Amorita also rose. Unheeding his violence she stretched her white arms out languidly, and let them fall slowly round his neck, looking full into his eyes. One moment she kept him thus, the next he held her closely in his arms, while their lips met in a long, passionate kiss.

. . . . . .

Ralph Swain had, for some time past, noticed a change in his friend. He was abstracted and reticent, and looked worn and haggard; yet he declared that he was in perfect health, and seemed to resent any remarks upon his appearance.

One day when they were standing talking to Don Juan Gonzales, a friend of Swain's, a woman of wonderful beauty passed the door. Swain, always eager to view a pretty face, craned his neck to look after her.

"Pretty woman that," he said regretfully. "Wonder I have not seen her before."

Gonzales laughed, then turned suddenly grave.

"Turn your eyes from her, my friend," he said. "That is Amorita, the witch and the ruin of Flores. It is said that by obtaining new victims she keeps him in funds. It is certain that no one who once gets into her toils can resist her, and many a man has died for her perfidy. There is something about her that makes a man believe in her until he finds her out. I know to my sorrow, for she ruined my faith in woman. It is now some time since she favoured us with her presence. I wonder where she is staying and who her latest victim is."

A gasp from Harcourt drew the men's attention to him. He stood leaning against the counter, breathing heavily, his face ghastly white.

Swain sprang to his assistance. "What is it, old fellow?" he asked anxiously.

Harcourt assured him that it was a sudden faintness produced by the heat; then meeting the keen eyes of Gonzales he blushed deeply. Swain thought no more of the incident, but Don Juan turned away with a cynical smile, murmuring "La belle Amorita."

Truth to tell, Will Harcourt, from the time he first opened the door leading to the Flores garden, had lived in a very torment. Possessed by an evil infatuation for the beautiful singer, his days were spent in remorse over his unfaithfulness to Madeline—whose letters lay unread and unanswered—and a determination to redeem his lost honour and free himself from the toils of the enchantress. But no matter what he might resolve, when night fell, and the silvery strains of her lute came softly through the adobe walls, he would hasten to the garden of Amorita. In her presence his doubts disappeared, but only to assail him with redoubled force when daylight came again, and he was forced to undergo the routine of his business.

The money he had carefully saved for Madeline was lavished upon Amorita. He believed what she told him, and, urged by her not to betray her hiding-place, he guarded the secret so jealously that even Swain never doubted him, but continually jested with him about his "hermit life," and his fidelity to Madeline. When he repeated to her Gonzales' story, she weepingly denied its truth, and at the sight of her lovely eyes filled with tears, Harcourt was ready to kill the man who had traduced her.

Time went on, until at last one day Will Harcourt awoke to the fact that he was ruined. A cheque given by him in payment of a bill had been refused at the Bank of Mexico. All the money he had toiled for had been cast in the lap of the siren. So far, he had been able to keep his secret from his friend, but now that would be impossible, and, after a long day of desperate conjecture, he resolved to bring matters to a crisis. He would throw himself at the feet of Amorita, beg her to marry him, and then join her brother in the mountains. By this act he knew he would dishonour himself for ever, but it would be better than his double life. Madeline's face rose before him, and he shuddered as he thought of her grief and broken heart. But the face of Amorita—alluring, beautiful, irresistible—drove all other thoughts away, and he determined to follow his desires.

As night drew on he paced restlessly up and down the patio, waiting for the sound of the lute, which was his signal to hasten to her side; but all was silent. Moments, hours dragged by, and still she did not call him. Finally, devoured by anxiety, he pushed open the hidden door, and followed the familiar way into the garden.

The patio was silent and deserted, the silver lamp unlit, but the moon, shining brightly, showed him the couch at the end, and it was empty.

He called her name. No answer but the echoes came. With growing alarm he searched the house; her lace mantilla lay where she had dropped it, but Amorita was not there.

Returning to the patio, he stood bewildered. The palms, the flowers were the same, the soft grasses strewn on the floor were undisturbed. The faint, subtle perfume, which was inseparable from Amorita, was in the air, but the lady had vanished. Something gleaning on the panther skins caught his eye. It was the lute which had first lured him to destruction, pinned with a small stiletto, and slipped under the strings was a note.

Hastily lighting the lamp he tore it open and read:

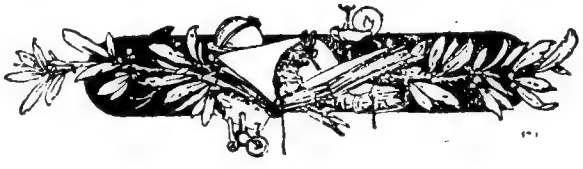
"Amigo mio: I go to the only man I could ever love, my brave José. To you who have made this possible I leave the lute you loved to hear in memory of your generosity. If that fails to compensate, there is the stiletto. Adios.

"AMORITA."

The paper fell from his hand, rustling softly. The unfilled lamp died down and went out. There was a sound of shrill discord, then—silence.

The first rays of the sun, peering merrily into the patio, fell upon Will Harcourt stretched upon the couch of Amorita with the dagger in his heart.

Beside him, rent and shattered, its spell gone for ever, lay the lute with silver strings.



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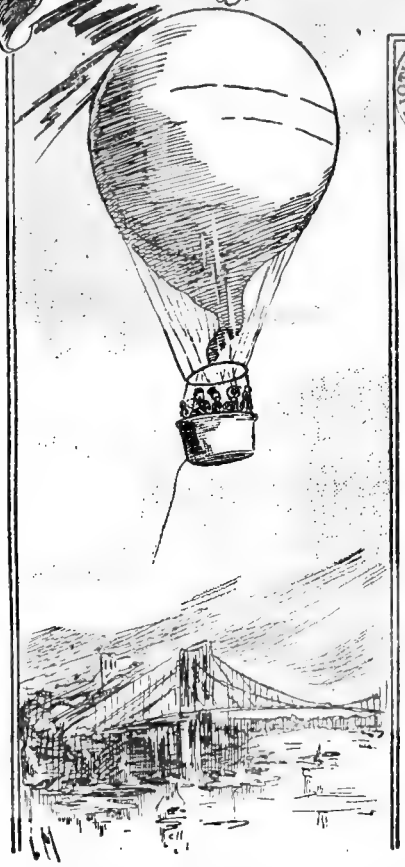
A WEDDING IN THE AIR



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"YOU cannot marry my daughter, young Bergen," Mr. Rowley declared. "until you are worth £8,000. £8,000 isn't a fortune, but it permits a man to start in life."

"Yes, sir," said I, standing, hat in hand, near his office desk in New York.

"Very well, young Bergen, go and make it, then," said old Rowley, "and after that ask me for Caroline Elizabeth."

"Yes, sir," said I, seizing my hat in a great hurry, as if I were going to cash a cheque for that amount instantly, for fear the bank would close, "and thank you very much."

"Kindly shut the door after you on account of the draught," responded old Rowley.

I did so, and then with a groan stalked out into the street. I did not possess 8,000 farthings. I had left England to make my fortune and I had not made it. I could look forward to making a decent salary and living on it, even putting a few pounds in a savings bank for a rainy day, and Caddie—that is what I called her—Caroline Elizabeth did not seem a bit like her to me—Caddie said she could keep house beautifully, and that she could be happy in the very cheapest flat that we shared together.

And now old Rowley commanded me to produce £8,000.

I would do anything, I thought, anything to get that sum of money, but when, where, how was it to be done?

Suddenly I ran violently into the arms of another man, who had stopped in the middle of the pavement to light a cigar.

"What the dickens—hullo, old boy, how d'ye do?" cried this person.

"Millett, by all that's wonderful!" said I; "I thought you were in South America."

"So I was," said he. "Gonzales and Ravello offered splendid terms for a five-year contract, but when I got down there I found the yellow fever in full blast. Boat came out to take us in; looked over the side, saw something sewn up in a sack floating about. 'What's that?' says I.

"'That, señor,' says the fellow that had come to fetch me, 'that, señor, is the Señor Jones, last head clerk of the respected Señors Gonzales and Ravello. He is dead of the yellow fever, and they no longer bury the dead, there are too many.'

"'That's the fellow who resigned his place and expected me to come and take it.'

"'I believe so, señor,' said he.

"'Ah, then you can take me back to the steamer,' said I; and here I am. Confoundedly disappointed, too. I counted on making £8,000 in these next five years."

"£8,000?" I repeated.

"Yes," said he. "But much good they'd do a fellow that was bobbing about the ocean in a sack."

"A man might not take the fever," said I.

"He might not," said Millett, "and then, again, he might."

"Have Gonzales and What's-his-Name got another head clerk yet?" asked I.

"Not they," said Millett. "There is a lot of commission as well as salary; as I said, a fellow might make £8,000 and £10,000 for himself—a fellow with a good connection. But what use——"

I did not stay to hear the rest.

With a brief "Good-bye," I rushed away, leaving Millett staring after me, sought the office of Gonzales and Ravello, and presented my credentials to the senior partner—a gentleman with round, black eyes rolling in orange-coloured seas, a round nose, and a quantity of straight, black hair, who was most affable, and learning that I spoke Spanish, received me with open arms.

"You may go at once," he said. "We need a new head clerk; ze former is a little indispose; he vish to retire. Matters are confuse in consequence. You are needed."

I remembered Millett's narrative, but did not repeat it.

"I will go," I said; "my object is to make money."

I signed the agreement, and proceeded to extract from Mr. Rowley a promise that if I returned at the end of five years with the sum he insisted upon, I should wed his daughter.

"Five years," old Rowley said, laughing. "Well, if she'll wait for you five years, I won't hinder her. I don't believe any girl will do that, though she may think she will. However, you show a proper spirit, and I know a man or two out there who will throw something in your way, and you can spend the evening with Caroline Elizabeth, if you like."

Caddie wept bitterly. She asked what use was anything at the end of five years. She wondered if I knew we should be dreadfully old by that time. She was sure I should fall in love with a black-eyed lady in a high comb and lace mantilla, and forget her. But she—oh! she would be true. She would be old and ugly, but as true as steel.

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"Saw something sewn up in a sack floating away."

I was very unhappy myself, and I had added cause in my secret knowledge of the fate of my predecessor, Mr. Jones. But I pretended to be very hopeful.

"Only be true to me," I said—"only be true."

She wept in my arms as she repeated her promise; and I only saw her once more before I started, when she came to see me off. I reached my destination in safety, and found that I had secured a splendid position. The yellow fever was dying out; and, at all events, they were used to it there. I took every precaution, and I did not take the fever. In fact, I kept very well.

I began to make money. I wrote as often as circumstances would permit to Caddie, and our course of true love was running very well, considering, when I received a most frightful letter from old Rowley.

"Young Bergen," it began, "merely because I mentioned the well-known fact that he was a liar and a thief, that abominable, contemptible, cowardly, and untrustworthy sneak, your uncle Tomkins, has called me some of the most offensive names in the English language. I have pulled his nose, he has beaten me with his cane, which I have taken from him and broken over his confounded back. It all happened in the Stock Exchange before a thousand witnesses. He was taken home in an ambulance, and as soon as he is well enough I am going to have him sent to a convict prison for five years.

"After being so ill-used by your uncle, I, as every one knows, the most inoffensive, law-abiding gentleman in New York, must renounce the *honour* (?) and *pleasure* (?) of being connected with him by marriage, and forbid you to write or speak to my daughter again. I have made her take her oath that she will never marry you. I did it gently, though firmly; but she knows the value of an oath.

"O. ROWLEY."

"P.S.—She has begged me to permit her to write you a farewell letter of explanation. I have yielded to paternal weakness and permitted this. You must not reply,

"O. R."

Her oath. Old Rowley, who supposed he had brought up his family piously, had a habit of lugging out a large family Bible which he possessed, and making them swear all sorts of things upon it. Such an oath I felt sure my Caddie would never dare break. I read her letter with a sinking heart.

"Papa has told you all," she said. "I love you, and I never will marry anyone else. When he got out the family Bible I said at first, 'No, sir, if you please, I don't wish to be undutiful, but I will not.' When he locked me up on bread and water I still refused; but when he got his pistols, both of them loaded, and held one at either of my temples, and said he should curse me first and shoot me afterwards, and mamma called through the keyhole that she was dying of fright, I gave in.

"'Swear,' said papa, 'that you will not marry this young Bergen as long as you are upon this earth or sail upon the waters thereof. Swear it, Caroline Elizabeth, if you wish to live. Otherwise you die, with my curse on your head.'

"It was an awful scene, but I put my hand upon the Bible, and said, after him, 'I will not marry my Henry as long as I am upon this earth or sail upon the waters thereof, but I will love him until I die.'

"'Just as you please about that,' said papa. Then mamma had nervous prostration, and she is only just getting well, and I wish I were dead. Your broken-hearted

"CADDIE."

This was old Rowley's gentle firmness, then. He had made his daughter take the oath at the pistol's mouth.

I read the letter over a dozen times; that clause about the waters of the earth seemed to bar every way of escape.

Even mid-ocean would not seem to invalidate her vow to so conscientious a creature as my little Caddie.

I wrote to Caddie, despite her father's edict, but no answer ever came to me, and probably my letter never reached her.

At last, however, a New York paper brought tidings which, while they were tragic, were hopeful.

Mr. Rowley was dead. There was a glowing obituary notice of him in the columns, but I heard afterward that he died in a fit of rage, caused by a dinner that did not please him.

As soon as it was possible to do so I asked for a holiday, and returned to New York.

Reaching the great city, I flew at once to the residence of the late Mr. Rowley.

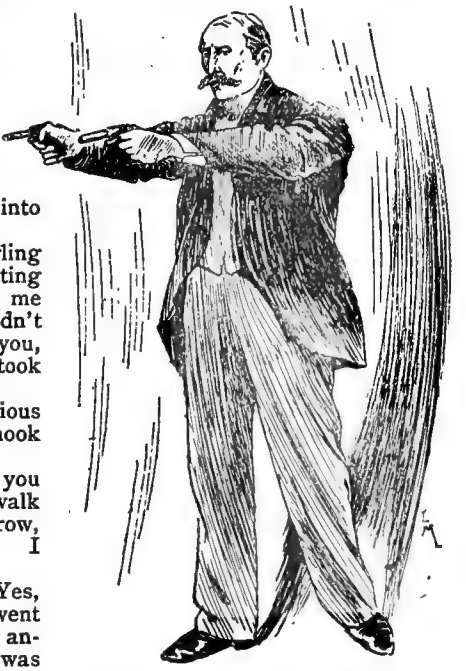
No one forbade me to enter the door, and soon Caddie, her eyes red with weeping, came to me in a black dress, and threw herself into my arms.

"Poor, dear, darling papa was just getting the Bible to make me swear that I wouldn't ever speak to you, when the angels took him," she said.

I looked as serious as possible, and shook my head.

"As he did not, you may take a little walk with me to-morrow, may you not?" I asked.

She answered, "Yes, dear," and I went away and made another call. It was upon a young clergy-



This was old Rowley's gentle firmness, then.

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man. And when he learned my plans and heard my story, he agreed to my request.

It was the year 1879. Coney Island had but recently been transformed from a peaceful solitude to the land of hotels, booths, showmen, and concert halls that it has now become.

It was to Coney Island that I took Caddie, and there we met the Rev. Mr. Nutley, a young clergyman, who bowed and blushed and introduced us to his married sister and her husband, and his younger sister, who smiled and showed her dimples as though she knew a little secret.

We walked about the island, had lunch together, and bought milk of the milkmaids, who drew it iced from the monstrous effigy of a cow, in the kiosk.

"There is the captive balloon," said my friend, the clergyman, just then; "let us all go up in her."

There was a captive balloon that year at Coney Island, and it was a great attraction.

An ascent was about to be made. A short interview with the manager won us permission to have it for ourselves for half-an-hour. We stepped in it, ascended the ladder, screamed and clung to each other, and in a minute or two we saw the world far beneath us. We were no longer of it.

"If the cord should break!" gasped Mr. Nutley's sister.

Nobody made any addition to this remark. Suddenly I seized Caddie's hand.

"My dear betrothed wife, we are no longer upon the earth, nor are we upon the waters thereof. Our position absolves you from the oath you took upon the family Bible. You pledged yourself to nothing concerning the air. It was only land and water. I have consulted Mr. Nutley, who is an expert in such matters. Being a clergyman, he is willing to marry us while we are in this balloon. He knows all the circumstances."

"My dear Miss Rowley," said Mr. Nutley, "I feel that it is quite proper of you to take a literal view of an oath you took under compulsion. Your excellent father, I am sure, would have it so if he could send a message from a better world. We all have moments of passion, in which we do things of which we repent. I believe he has repented of offering you that oath, and I believe, being what it was, you may marry in the air with all propriety."

"We think so too," chorused our friends.

Then Caddie, blushing and weeping, drew off her little glove, and my friend Nutley united us in the holy bonds of matrimony, in the presence of witnesses.

How the news got about I do not know, but we were saluted with cheers as we descended to *terra firma*, and were mentioned in next day's paper as a couple who sought notoriety by being married in the captive balloon.

My readers, however, know the reason, and no one has ever blamed us for it.

A SOLDIER OF BRITTANY.

FROM THE FRENCH.

It was in the country, near the forest not far from the Seine, in the modest villa where I hoped to spend my old age, that I saw Jean de Thommeray for the first time. He was scarcely twenty-two. Some pages signed with my name had won his heart to me, and he presented himself with no other recommendation than his good appearance and his desire to know me. The sympathy of the young has an irresistible attraction. It is very sweet to be able to draw them when one is approaching the autumn of life. I was the more willing to give him a welcome that I could do so without any effort, for he was really charming.

It was a clear April day. We walked together in the woods of Meudon. Though many years divided us, we conversed like two friends. He had generous impulses, holy illusions; all the happy and ardent feelings of his age.

Thanks to the confidences he gave me without my asking, I soon found out all about him. His father, who came of a good old Breton family, had studied in Paris, in the days when patriotism and liberty ranked as high as letters and arts among the young men of modern ideas.

The Breton gentleman felt the influences of this awakening in the flood of thought, and, without giving up the traditions of honour in his family, he set sail with the current. He loved, with a pure, delicate, romantic love, a poor girl of good family, of Irish descent, and he married her. When his studies were ended, he went back to Brittany.

Here Monsieur de Thommeray lived, like his forefathers, the life of a country gentleman—hunting, riding horseback, visiting his neighbours, improving his land; while his wife—"la belle Irlandaise," as they called her—gave herself up to domestic affairs, and governed with grace and authority. Though he had taken root in this primitive life, he was faithful to the tastes and inclinations of his youthful days. He never went beyond the circle of his remembrances, and for him nothing beyond them seemed to exist. Time, which never stops, had apparently forgotten him on the way.

It was a happy family, he, his wife, and his three sons. The elder and the second son showed no taste for study or literature, but Jean, the little one, more delicate than his brothers, grew up, under his mother's gentle wing, with a strong sense of the beauties and harmonies of creation and a love of books. While his brothers walked and rode over the farm, and led a hardy, rustic life, Jean read, dreamed, or composed little Breton poems that his mother proudly compared to Moore's "Irish Melodies," and that excited the admiration of his father. His brothers, too, were proud of his gifts and his charming ways, and even of his weakness when a little fellow, for that seemed to claim their protection.

But one morning, not long before the time I first met him, Jean embraced them all and set out for Paris, filled with the same illusions that his father had had before him.

Two or three years passed. I did not know what had become of Jean. I supposed that he must have left Paris, and that he was living peacefully in his father's home. He had evidently forgotten me. I was not surprised at that. As for me, I thought of him from time to time. A journey I made into Brittany revived in my heart the memory of my young friend, when I learned one day that I was only a few leagues from the Manor of Thommeray. I arrived at nightfall at the house I loved to think of as the asylum of happiness. I found the family assembled, and, not seeing Jean, naturally I asked for him. M. de Thommeray answered me briefly. "Monsieur," he said, "we have only two sons now—these whom you see. We never speak of the one we have lost."

Was Jean dead? No; the attitude of M. de Thommeray, his voice, his language, and his gesture were not those of a father who has buried his son. During my visit his mother found an opportunity of speaking to me alone. She told of her son and of the sorrow he had brought upon them—how he had compromised himself, falling lower and lower from day to day, in the wicked world of Paris, and how his family no longer looked upon him as their own. She made me promise to go to see him, to write to her and to let her know how he lived, to hide nothing from her. Could this be the same Jean de Thommeray whom I had known? How could he have fallen so low from the heights where I had left him?

I went back to Paris. I found him living in richly-furnished apartments, and he held out his hand to me with an easy grace, as if he had not a pang in the world—as if the luxury, in the midst of which I had surprised him, had been bought by the efforts of a glorious and honest labour, instead of the

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fruits of the gaming-table. He began to excuse himself for having so long neglected me.

"All that is excused," I said. "I have come from Brittany, where I saw your parents, and as you have always spoken of them with respect, I am only fulfilling a duty when I come to tell you of the sad state in which I found them——"

"Thanks, monsieur, you need not go on." He interrupted me calmly and with a tone of great urbanity. "It is nothing new that you tell me. My way of living is a subject of scandal and trouble to my family. My brothers disown me, my mother weeps in secret, my father no longer knows me. Well, sir, be my judge. I am not a saint. Not being able to reform the age as once I thought of doing, you remember, I have ended by adopting its ways and wearing its livery. It seems to me that in a society where money is a god, not to be rich would be an impiety. I have played, I do not deny it, and I have always won. By my skilful playing I keep up the state of the house and belongings I won by my luck. My parents lived according to the manner of their time. I live according to the ways of my own."

It was sad to hear this young man exult in his fall and glory in his ruin. All about him betrayed the habits of the life he now led. His very smile, once so sweet and clear, had a cold expression like the hard lustre of steel. He told me his story, how he had been basely deceived and robbed of his last centime by a woman whom he thought deserving of his heart's devotion, in spite of his mother's penetration, which had sounded the depths of unworthiness in the character hidden beneath the charms of beauty and an artless manner; how, when he came to his senses, his youth was dead, and a new and a worse man had come to life within him. He believed no more in anything good.

"There are no longer any women!" he said.

"You are mistaken," I replied. "We have mothers, sisters, friends, wives, who every day and every hour quietly accomplish miracles of goodness, devotion, and charity. Society is not as bad as you think; but you, you, sir, are much worse than I feared. Still, why not return to your family, who are grieving for you? Your youth is not dead; it is waiting for you there."

"It is too late! I must confess to you that since my sojourn at Baden the gambling fever has never left me. Let us live and enjoy ourselves; after us, the deluge? It is now my hour for the *Bourse*, and, to my regret, I am obliged to leave you."

"One word more," I said, rising. "Until now you have been successful; but fortune will not always be on your side. What will you do when she betrays you? For that day will surely come."

"Let it come. I am ready!"

"You will kill yourself," I said. He did not answer. "And God?——and your mother?" After a moment's hesitation, he held out his hand. I took it.

A few days after this I wrote to Madame de Thommeray and gave an account of my interview with Jean. I did not try to see him again. Other thoughts occupied me. War was declared. The enemy was already marching on Paris; the world was filled with the noise of our disasters.

Whoever did not see Paris during the last days of the siege cannot form an idea of the physiognomy of the city at that time. The confusion and flight brought on by the first news of our defeat gave way to manly thoughts and noble resolves. Every one was ready for great sacrifices.

One morning, on the Quai Voltaire, between the Pont-Royal and the Pont des Saints-Pères, I met Jean, face to face.

"At last!" I said, greeting him. "And you have stayed?"

"Yes, I have stayed here," he replied. "I was obliged to look after my fortune. Now it is all arranged. I have drawn out all my money, and I leave this evening to go and live in a foreign land."

"You are going away!" I exclaimed. "When your country is in agony, you think of leaving her?"

"My country, monsieur! The wise man carries his country wherever he goes. You, yourself, what are you doing here?"

"I have not returned only to go away again. I am not worth much; but here I have known good and bad days. Paris has given me whatever good I have in me. I wish to share her dangers, if only by my presence. I will live in her emotions, I will help to bear her anguish; and if we suffer hunger, I shall have the honour of suffering with her. But you, Jean de Thommeray! But you! I knew you were changed for the worse, but I did not think you were fallen so low.

"The land is invaded—and you, a young man, instead of seizing a musket, catch hold of your pocket-book! The fortunes of France are on the verge of ruin, and you have no other care than to realise your future. To-morrow the enemy will be at our gates, and you strap up your valise and fly like a coward! It was not enough to have plunged your family into mourning and despair. You must inflict this shame, too, upon them!"

A quick flush rose to his forehead. A light shone in his eyes.

"Pardon, monsieur, pardon. These are very grand words, it seems to me. You are too old and I am too young for us to understand each other. I am not running away. I am *going* away. There is nothing here to keep me. Paris does not interest me. It is only just that she should be punished. As for my family, they are safe enough from the dangers of war, and I do not see why I should be forbidden to seek for myself —in Brussels, or in London, or Florence—the peace and security they enjoy in Brittany."

My heart was sick and disgusted. I turned away, when suddenly Jean started with surprise. "Listen!" he said. I listened, and heard a strange music, the tones of which, vague at first and indistinct, grew louder and louder, and seemed to be coming towards us. I looked, too, as I listened.

I saw beyond the bridge of Solferino an immense crowd, who came on singing. It was a slow, grave chant, almost religious, and had nothing in common with the bursts of song to which we were accustomed. Jean leaned against the parapet. I saw that he was very pale. In the meantime, the confused mass approached nearer and nearer, and became less and less confused. The *gardes mobiles* of Finisterre were entering Paris.

The head of the column is now only a few steps from us. It is my turn to be startled. I look at Jean. His hand falls upon mine. "My father! My two brothers!" he says in a low voice. And he sees passing before him, under their most striking forms, the eternal truths that he has so long disowned or forgotten—God, country, duty, and family! The long pageant of his honest and noble days defiled before him singing as the troops go by. I give him the last blow. On one of the balconies of the *quai* I have just seen his mother.

"You unfortunate fellow!" I exclaim. "You said there were no longer any women. Look, there is one. Do you recognise her?"

Madame de Thommeray waves her handkerchief; the Breton chant redoubles in fervour, and the chief of the battalion, with the courtesy of a knightly gentleman, bows in his saddle, and salutes her with his sword. Mute and motionless, with sad eyes and dry eyelids, Jean seems turned to stone. I leave him to the mercy of God.

The next day, in the courtyard of the Louvre, the Commandant de Thommeray called the roll of his battalion. The call finished, he passed down the ranks, when a soldier stepped out and said:

"Commandant, one of your men was forgotten."

"What is your name?"

"My name is Jean," answered the volunteer, lowering his eyes.

"Who are you?"

"A man who has lived badly."

"What do you wish?"

"To die well."

"Are you rich or poor?"

"Yesterday I possessed an ill-gotten fortune. I have resigned it voluntarily. I have only my musket and my knapsack."

"That is well." And with a gesture he ordered the young man to return to the ranks. There was a long silence. The Commandant had again taken his place in front of the battalion. "Jean de Thommeray!" he called out.

A manly voice answered, "*Present!*"

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THE NORWEGIAN BRIG.

IT was during the Empire, when Napoleon was knocking the kings right and left. The Englishmen had blockaded all the French ports, and privateering was almost impossible, for a cruise was pretty sure to come to an end in the Plymouth Prison.

So nearly all the French ships lay sunning themselves at their moorings, like so many rotten old hulks.

But a few Frenchmen were still cruising on the high seas, and giving the Englishmen an occasional shot by way of revenge and in order to keep in practice. One of these was Captain Kerkof, a true Breton, hard-featured and swarthy; stiff as a handspike, thirsty as a cook, and jolly as a midshipman.

He was a good Christian withal, for he never failed to have mass said on leaving port, and had given one of his richest prizes to the chapel of St. Barbe—all of which did not prevent his being leader of a crew of sharks and the greatest scoundrel of the lot.

Kerkof, then, in spite of the Englishmen, was roaming the North Sea in his pretty schooner, the *Sans Quartier*, with his eye on the wind and his hands in his own pockets, in default of others.

It was a day of dense fog, and the horizon was shadowy, but suddenly the captain saw the ghostly form of a brig cleaving the fog, and standing on a course nearly parallel to his own.

At the same moment the look-out cried, "Sail on the starboard quarter!"

"What fool of a skipper dares come within gunshot of the *Sans Quartier*?" roared Kerkof. "If he's an Englishman, we'll give him a trip to France for the good of his health. Come, my lads, clear the decks! Crowd all sail and send the stranger our card, for we privateers must be polite, above all else."

The next instant a ball from one of the schooner's guns plunged through the fog and pierced the rigging of the mysterious brig.

There was a moment of suspense, but the stranger had evidently understood this polite invitation to show her colours, for a small English flag soon ran up a halyard, and fluttered at the brig's peak.

"Good!" cried Kerkof, calmly filling his pipe; "to your guns, my lads, but don't fire until I give the word."

The *Sans Quartier* changed her course slightly, and bore down upon her prey with outspread wings, like a cormorant.

The situation of the brig seemed desperate, as the point for which she was making would evidently be reached by the *Sans Quartier* at the same time, so that the stranger was running straight into the range of her formidable adversary's guns.

She kept on her course, however, and as she grew more distinct an expression of wonder overspread the faces of Kerkof and his crew.

"What kind of ship is that?" said the captain. "Did you ever see such a rig, my lads? She doesn't carry sail enough to cross a mill-pond in a week, you'd say, but there she goes making a good twelve knots before our eyes! I'll be hanged if I can understand it!"

The crew answered only by nods and oaths, and the like symptoms of surprise and terror.

But the preparations for attack went on, and the gunners stood at their posts with lighted matches.

"Attention!" suddenly cried Kerkof, springing into the nettings. "Ship or shadow, we'll send a volley into her. Now we're in line. Ready, men? Fire!"

A terrible detonation shook every timber of the *San Quartier*.

When the smoke cleared away, the men gazed in amazement at the spot where the brig had been.

She had vanished! Not a vestige of her to be seen!

"Sunk!" cried a dozen voices.

"Silence, fools!" roared Kerkof.

With an air of stupefaction he scanned the sea in all directions. All eyes followed his, and soon there rose a chorus of oaths, for the brig, dimly seen through the fog, was scudding away, *far to larboard and with all sails furled*.

"Fire again!" cried Kerkof, in a hoarse, unnatural voice.

The second broadside was given with less precision than the first, for the strange sight had lured some of the gunners from their posts.

The brig was too far away to be affected by the ragged volley, and was soon lost to sight in the fog.

Kerkof, leaning against the nettings, was still staring in amazement at the spot where she had vanished, when the boatswain's voice roused him from his stupor.

"Captain!"

"Well?"

"Captain, did you see that brig?"

"Of course I did, you idiot!"

"Well, Captain, she is the very one we sunk in the Channel a year ago this blessed day."

"What!"

"Yes, Captain, a year ago to-day. It was Good Friday, you know. Perhaps the crew were not prepared for death, and they have come back to ask our prayers for the repose of their souls."

"You are an idiot!"

"Well, may be I am, Captain."

The old sailor retired, slowly shaking his head, and Kerkof resumed his reverie.

The sun went down, and the privateer kept on her course with a favouring wind.

Suddenly the men, who had been discussing the strange occurrence, set up a great shout.

Kerkof raised his head and recoiled in astonishment.

Close on the port bow stood the strange brig, with all sails furled, but keeping even pace with the schooner. A torrent of smoke and flame poured from a great black cylinder amidships.

"The brig!" gasped a voice near Kerkof.

"To your guns and fire!" shouted he.

The terrible brig seemed to have heard this hoarse and broken command, for she bounded forward, crossed the schooner's bows, and soon disappeared to starboard.

She passed so close to the *Sans Quartier* that the roaring of the flames was heard, and through the port-holes was seen a fiercely-blazing fire, with fantastic human figures moving about in its ruddy light.

Not a word was spoken aboard the Frenchman. The crew fell on their knees. For full ten minutes Kerkof knelt, with head bared, and his rosary in his hands.

Several days later the *Sans Quartier* made Breton port. Kerkof and his crew never knew what had frightened them so badly, but about this time the English newspapers announced the arrival at London of a steamboat hailing from Norway.

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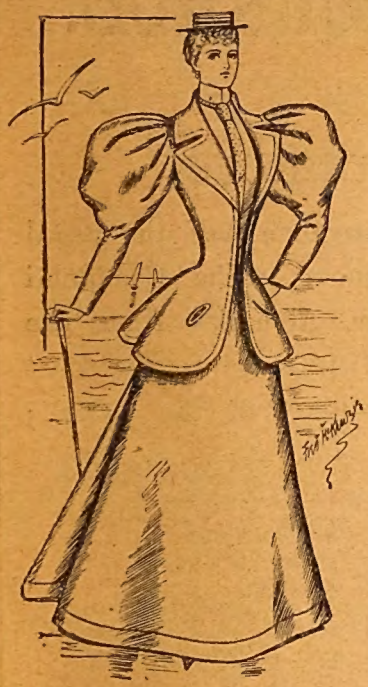

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25	3 4 10	8 16 4	3 16 0	5 0 4
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35	3 17 6	11 9 4	4 12 0	6 17 4
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49	6 12 10	18 3 4	7 16 0	10 7 4

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